Rethinking Celtic Art

edited by
Duncan Garrow,
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Oxbow Books
Oxford & Philadelphia

Published in the United Kingdom by
OXBOW BOOKS
10 Hythe Bridge Street, Oxford OX1 2EW

and in the United States by
OXBOW BOOKS
908 Darby Road, Havertown, PA 19083

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Paperback Edition: ISBN 978-1-84217-318-3
E-pub Edition: ISBN 978-1-78297-821-3; Mobi: ISBN 978-1-78297-822-0;
PDF: ISBN 978-1-78297-823-7

First printed 2008
Reprinted 2014

A CIP record for this book is available from the British Library

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Introduction: re-integrating ‘Celtic’ art

Chris Gosden and J. D. Hill

The material known as Early Celtic art represents an odd collective of objects which owes as much to archaeologists’ categories as it does to any mode of grouping or using the material in the Iron Age. Generally included under this label are personal ornaments (such as arm rings and torcs), weapons or armour (daggers, helmets, shields and swords), horse and chariot gear and varied items including fire dogs, mirrors, spoons and tankards (see Garrow this volume for more details). Brooches and coins are generally excluded, except on those occasions where details of form or iconography make it relevant to draw them into a discussion. These items are first found in Britain around 350 BC (although dating is a problem) and they continue until well after the Roman invasion of AD 43. A variety of decoration is seen ranging from human or animal forms (abstract or realistic), curvilinear designs in engraved or three-dimensional forms, along with geometrical designs, and the use of glass inlays (often wrongly called enamelling) a prominent feature of British material. The majority of objects are made from bronze, brass or iron, but are also found in silver, electrum or gold, or, very rarely pottery, wood and bone. The forms and decoration of the British objects are often linked to continental types and seen by many to have continental origins ultimately (a notion we question below). British Early Celtic art is distinctively different from that found in other parts of Europe, a feature widely recognised by the use of the term ‘insular’, and there are very few objects imported into Britain from elsewhere.

A key feature of discussions of British and Irish Early Celtic art has been the separation between considerations of this material and the rest of the evidence from the Iron Age. The lack of graves in Britain for much of the Iron Age means that the majority of the finds counted as Celtic art are from dry land hoards or wet contexts, with a minority from settlements or burials, so that they lack the sorts of contextual details that can link them to other aspects of the archaeological record. Dating is also a problem. Even where burials are found, such as in East Yorkshire, Cornwall or Central East Scotland, they are generally poor in grave goods compared to those in other parts of Europe. This paucity of finds in settlements or graves, together with the lack of Celtic art motifs on pottery or bone, means that the corpus of Celtic art has been cut off from more general considerations of the archaeological evidence, becoming a specialised area of study in its own right. In order to understand how this might change, so that Celtic art becomes reintegrated into broader considerations of archaeology, let us look at past and current discussions of the late Iron Age more generally.

The late Iron Age has always been seen as a period of dynamic change although the reasons adduced for this dynamism have changed over the years. In early considerations it was thought that the movement of people from the continent into southeast England set in train changes of burial rite and social formations more generally, a view starting with Evans' (1890) consideration of the Aylesford cemetery based around notions of Belgic immigrants, an idea picked up by Hawkes and Dunning (1931) and refined by Hawkes (1959). Although the idea of migration was firmly dismissed in the 1960s and 1970s with many explanations stressing internally derived change, the importance of continental influence remained through to the 1980s and beyond, with core-periphery models emphasising the importance of links with Gaul which in turn was a conduit for Mediterranean influence. In all these models change is derived from the continent late in the first millennium BC which brought about new developments in southeast English social, economic and political forms, which in turn influenced the rest of Britain (Haselgrove 1982, Cunliffe 1986).

Very recently, the sheer volatility and the unusual nature of the changes in south eastern England in the first centuries BC and AD have been emphasised (Haselgrove and Moore 2007, Hill 2007). Increasing bodies of material from research and rescue excavations across the rest of Britain and Ireland have suggested the changes seen in the late Iron Age in south eastern England after 100 BC are just one manifestation of a broad series of social, cultural and economic changes that took place across Atlantic

Europe from the 3rd/2nd centuries BC onwards. A longer temporal perspective on the later Iron Age together with a broader geographical consideration is starting to challenge interpretations that see social and material changes as having external causes. Indeed, it is now less clear what is internal and what external or whether the Channel and the North Sea provided bridges or barriers. A new picture is emerging of dynamic and interconnected agrarian societies, often showing strong concerns to maintain a local identity, but while still taking up cultural forms of widespread currency. This balancing between the global and the local takes place against a pattern of expanding populations, intensification of agriculture and artefactual production, changes in kinship groups and the manner in which objects were used to mark relationships. It is into this fast-changing situation that we have to insert our understanding of Early Celtic art and its subsequent changes over the centuries. Not least we have to be aware of the Roman context, as so much of the material from southern Britain was deposited in the first century AD and the vast majority of the northern corpus is early Roman (i.e. AD 50–200).

New views of south-east England at the turn of the millennium see the centres of power and influence in the very late Iron Age growing up new in previously marginal areas, rather than developing in places that had long held some importance. Many of the so-called ‘oppida’ start in previously peripheral areas, as do new large-scale production centres of metal, pottery and salt. Such views make the nature of human attachments to land and resources somewhat mysterious given the way that such attachments have been thought about in existing models. These were societies with a definite agricultural base in both arable and animal herding, but may not have always been sedentary in the sense that they viewed themselves as tethered to land which they saw as their territory. Instead, people seem to have been happy to move into new places that may have been previously unoccupied or only sparsely used – central to Hill’s view (2007) is that areas like Hertfordshire and southern Essex see very rapid increases of population after 100 BC (and possibly later than that) due to the settlement of new people from outside the regions, who quickly develop new forms of pottery, eating and drinking, coins and crosschannel links. Although there is considerable discontinuity from middle Iron Age developments, these sudden, novel changes can only be understood against earlier longer-term trends, echoing a general idea that many of the developments in the late

Iron Age have an ultimate origin in earlier periods. The novelty of such relations extends also to material culture, so that the manners in which people are attached to each other (or divided from each other) depend on new types of objects and novel uses of old objects.

Early Celtic art starts in the middle Iron Age, as part of a broader and slightly paradoxical set of changes. People are creating their own distinct identities, but are also putting together materials and features of the landscape found widely across Europe. Early Celtic art fits perfectly into this paradox, giving local nuance and shape to metal forms and decorations found from eastern Europe to Ireland. People used material derived from their neighbours to become more like themselves. A networking model in which material and influence flows from group to group in a multi-directional manner is preferable to any centres of origin from which influence spreads out like ripples in a pond. Our identification of such centres in the past has been heavily influenced by the occurrence of contexts in which early Celtic art is found, primarily in graves in places like France, Germany, Austria or the Czech Republic. Britain and Ireland can only ever look like receivers in such a model. Instead, we would see Early Celtic art as a quicksilver element in a volatile world where objects and decorative forms move, are appropriated and re-created in tune with local sensibilities. Britain and Ireland both received and gave to such a world, helping increase the overall variety of forms. The earlier occurrences at least of Early Celtic art help generate variety of form and decoration, creating objects which were hard to give fixed or stable readings to. Fine metalwork was helpful in negotiating and re-negotiating social positions in a world of flux, so that objects were crucial patterns in an unstable world. Later on, especially in the north, Early Celtic art was keyed into another set of instabilities caused by the coming of the Romans and the creation of hybrid cultures of resistance and acceptance. The great importance of early Celtic art was as something, which through its variety, could be used as a response to changing and shifting social conditions. If it had multiple meanings in the past, we should not expect to generate a single meaning for it in the present.

For the analyst, these are pleasingly uncertain times in which we are thrown back on the nature of the archaeological evidence to a great extent, due to the fact that no readymade model or ethnographic analogy is adequate to understand the late Iron Age and Romano-British periods of any part of Britain. As the previous political-economic paradigm recedes with its emphasis on production and exchange, cores and peripheries and possible shifts from chiefly societies to emerging state forms with possible private land ownership and classes based on differential access to the means of production we are left with a vaguer post-processual set of views. These views have not emphasised politics or economics, looking instead at consumption rather than production, the creation of places rather than land tenure, the new social entailments of food, drink and artefacts; regionalization and variability of identities replace core and periphery, so that becoming Roman is one more step in changing identities which involves maintaining links to the local past as well as the adoption of novel ways.

New approaches to the later Iron Age more generally prompt different views of Celtic art. A key starting point is the idea mentioned above that the nature of people's attachments to the material world needs considerable thought and reflection. Attachments to place partly concerned acts of making, exchange and deposition, so that place and objects might well have been linked. The objects we class as Celtic art might well have been key, being highly visible and resulting from complex processes of making, exchange, use and deposition. Their forms and styles were variable, but also highly coded making them possible mechanisms for the generation of novelty within known parameters. It is unfortunate then that the consideration of Celtic art has so often been at a distance from other aspects of the Iron Age evidence – "Study of insular La Tène art is too often a separate and isolated study which contributes little to our construction of the Iron Age …" (Macdonald 2007: 334) is a widespread sentiment and one of the key aims of this book is to bring an end to this isolation. In what follows we shall sketch out possible modes of approach to the rich metalwork of the later Iron Age, which are generally speaking in tune with newly emerging ideas concerning the later Iron Age as a whole.

The term 'Celtic' helps imply that this material has a link to, or possible origin in, the European continent. While links there certainly are, there is no reason to believe, on the basis of present evidence, that Celtic art was introduced to Britain from the outside. Had this been the case we might have expected to see a horizon of imports into Britain followed by obvious British imitations, although we have to admit that the lack of imports might be partly due to the overall rarity of deposition of fine metalwork. As the Megaws point out in their chapter imports into Britain are few and even the earliest local material we find has characteristically British forms and modes of decoration. The conclusion we draw from this is not that Celtic art started independently in Britain, but rather that these islands were part of the area in which Celtic art grew up, so that insular communities participated in its genesis rather than receiving influences from the outside. Such a view gets away from the dichotomy of local origin versus outside influence (possibly through migrations) and it also questions the insular nature of British society. The Channel and North Sea may have helped join Britain to France and the Low Countries, rather than separate them, so that practices and materials were shared by communities on either side of these areas of sea, ultimately as part of a broader Atlantic world (Cunliffe 2001). As Kristiansen (1998) has also pointed out we need to understand the widespread distribution across western and northern Europe of similar types of metalwork from the early Bronze Age onwards and Celtic art (not explicitly mentioned by Kristiansen) is no exception to this. For other periods of the Iron Age, such as its very beginning, it has been realised that artefact types once thought to have continental derivation, such as Gündlingen swords, may in fact have a derivation either within the Thames region or within Britain and Europe jointly (O’Connor 2007). Hill (2007: 25) has hinted that a similar situation may pertain for so-called Gallo-Belgic coins; the name hinting at external origins when a shared genesis may be more likely. As is always mentioned in such discussions, the genesis of Celtic art is invisible, probably because the set of practices that came to be associated with this material developed regionally and then spread so rapidly so as to elude archaeological identification. Indeed, rapid take up might well be an aspect of this material as we shall see below with reference to post-Conquest materials.

In order to understand the metalwork of the later Iron Age we need to think how it was made, exchanged, used and deposited. Here we face the challenge common to many studies of the biographies of prehistoric European objects. We know much about the deposition of objects, less about their exchange and use. We also know very little about their production. Detailed technical studies are revealing the surprisingly complex skills needed to make some objects and are providing indications about the organisation and scale of metalworking. Extracting copper, tin and iron was usually a specialist activity, not connected with making objects and extraction took place at a series of scales throughout the period, from relatively infrequent, small scale activity to potentially larger scale seasonal production by larger groups. But was all the making of artefacts carried out by specialists? We have little evidence for the production of complicated art objects, but that which exists, such as the much-discussed moulds for vehicle and chariot fittings from Gussage All Saints, Weelsby Avenue and Silchester (Foster 1980, see also Foster 1995) is seen as evidence for a specialist bronze smith. However, the production of terrets might not have been that difficult for anyone with a practical cast of mind and a knowledge of fire, wax, metal and clay. Many Middle and Late Iron Age sites have evidence for the making of iron and copper alloy objects. This suggests a relatively large number of people had the knowledge and the skill to make metal objects. We must bear in mind that the inhabitants of the western world of the twentieth century are very much cut off from any aspect of metalworking, which is now either an industrial process or the province of the specialist artist, artisan or jeweller. It is possible that the people of the Iron Age were more able to work metal than we might suspect given our own general inability. The fact that production took place on ordinary settlements like those of Gussage and Weelsby Avenue shows that the process was embedded in everyday practices to some extent. As mentioned above, technological studies indicate the existence of some very skilled specialists, although they did not necessarily work apart from everyone else or in a rigid hiereracy determined by skill. We can at least speculate that making Celtic art might have been as important as using or appreciating it and something that people might have done as part of rites of passage, so creating objects linked to their own biographies. Our lack of knowledge makes any one view of production suspect, but it should not lead us to assume that all metalwork was produced by specialists.

A variety of models is possible. For many, the metalwork of the later Iron Age was art not just by virtue of its form and decoration, but also due to the mode of production, which might be seen as a Medici model of patron and artist. Here Fox, in more conventional mood than in other aspects of his work, sums up nicely – ‘Since the art we shall study in this book is mainly aristocratic, workers in metals (and wood) may have been attached to the households of leading chiefdoms (and, later, kings) …’

(Fox 1958: xxvi), while smaller items like brooches and pins might have been produced in smaller and more independent workshops. This model of production had the analytical advantage for Fox of allowing him to recognise various schools with distinctive products. A patron-artist view of production does not just imply that only a few had the wherewithal to support specialist non-agricultural workers, but also that refined discernment was needed to appreciate the fine variety of the decoration and stylishness of form. The art was aristocratic both in its modes of production and consumption. In recent years the magical nature of smithing has been more emphasised and we can see that metalworking might have been embedded in processes of everyday life, but not at all mundane. Making metal could have shown people to be in excellent touch with the cosmological powers of the universe and some, who we call specialists, more so than others. The majority of the population aspired to such powers on limited occasions (perhaps aided by those more skilled), with metal objects tangible proof of their cosmological standing. Such arguments link people and objects firmly, with the creative aspects of a person residing in objects which can be moved through space and last for longer than the life span of the creator (see Hingley 2006 for more discussion of such issues as they pertain to iron).

Two key issues we have skirted round so far are firstly, how much metalwork might there have been in circulation and how full is the evidence now for what existed then? Secondly, was Early Celtic art found everywhere in Iron Age Britain? Did everyone wear electrum torcs, but only people in Norfolk and Staffordshire put them in the ground? Do the regional patterns we see in distributions today reflect differences in deposition or in recovery now? Overall, there is surprisingly little Early Celtic art in Britain and Ireland. There are fewer than 100 ‘major’ pieces of decorated metalwork from over 400 years of use. How common were objects decorated with Celtic art? Should we envisage communities awash with Battersea shields, Kirkburn swords, torcs and chariot gear? Or were there only ever a handful of decorated shields and swords at any one time? These questions have major implications for understanding the production, use and significance of these objects.

The following figures are obviously an exercise in speculation, but they do suggest how little evidence we have compared to that which once existed. Let us start with one of the most common elements of Celtic art, chariot fittings. British Iron Age chariots/two-wheeled vehicles are commonly seen as needing two bits, a large terret and two small terrets for each of the two horses (making five in all) fitted to the yoke and through which the reins were passed, together with a number of loops and strap ends and two linch pins for the wheels. Caesar estimates that Cassivellaunus mustered some 4,000 chariots against him in south-east England in 54 BC (none of these are evidenced in the archaeological record – all twenty known British chariot burials either come from East Yorkshire or Newbridge near Edinburgh). Due to the imperfections of his knowledge and the need to provide impressive war propaganda, it is likely that Caesar exaggerated. However, if we halve his estimate, then 2000 chariots would still need 10,000 terrets, 4000 horse bits and 4000 linch pins, plus many other ancillary metal fittings for the chariots and horses. Taking another tack, Gussage is said to represent moulds for making 50 terret sets (250 terrets in all). Only just over twice that number (almost 600) are known from the entire country and for the whole of the period of terret's use (Garrow, this volume). Pushing our speculations still further we can estimate that there may have been 1,000,000 people in Britain in the late Iron Age with at least 100,000 people in southern Britain and maybe more. Halving Caesar's estimate of the number of chariots would give us one for every fifty people, meaning that each extended family, made up of 4–5 households, might have had a chariot, which seems a reasonable possibility. Whatever the validity of this exercise, one conclusion seems inescapable: we have archaeological evidence of only a tiny fraction of the Celtic art that would originally have been in circulation.

Let us rerun these estimates one more time, with another well known body of material – swords. Stead's (2006) corpus contains some 278 swords for mainland Britain from the period of roughly 400 BC to AD 100, much less than one sword a year. The swords are found in two main sets of contexts – the burials of East Yorkshire and river deposits further south, especially those from the Thames. If we assume again that there were 1,000,000 people in Britain in the late Iron Age and that a third of the population was adult. If one in five of adult men carried a sword, a rough proportion seen in other areas of Europe, then this would result in around 30,000 swords at any one time; if they were carried by both genders then the number would be doubled. Even if we assume that swords were very restricted, so that one in every hundred adults had a sword this would still mean 3300 swords in contemporary use, adding up to many thousands over the period of sword use as a whole. Such uncertainty in the nature of the evidence allows us to imagine various scenarios of use, from one where pretty well all adults had a sword to those where use was very restricted indeed, making it impossible to tell whether fine metalwork was a purely elite phenomenon or widely distributed.

We shall not labour these points further, but we can be clear that the deposition of Celtic art was an unusual event and so likely to have been unusually important. The vast majority of Celtic art and related objects have not entered the archaeological record. The study of Celtic art is the study of exceptions, not the rule. A key question to ask is why the objects which were deposited were able to escape the rule? What were the circumstances in which they evaded the normal life cycles for objects of their type? Did this have to do with the special qualities of form or decoration, or was it rather to do with some aspect of the history of the object? Or can we think of them as being in the wrong place at the wrong time, suffering a fate that most others avoided? Some objects, such as the Kirkburn sword (Stead 2006, Giles this volume) were clearly old when deposited and this might also have been true of the Witham shield. Did age mean that they broke out of ties which formerly bound them to people and to the world above the water or ground? The Kirkburn sword and two very similar swords from two chariot burials at Wetwang Slack raise other questions. Swords are unusual objects to place in Middle Iron Age burials in East Yorkshire, but these three are very similar. They might even have been made by the same person. Was there something about these swords that led to their deposition, even if at some time apart?

As Garrow discusses in his chapter, most Celtic art comes from dry land hoards or watery contexts, which is very different to pottery, bone, plant remains or even iron currency bars. Garrow also compares the distributions of coins and Early Celtic art. However, given the amount of work done on the nature of deposition in the Iron Age (Hill 1995) or metallurgy more generally (Bradley 1990) it should be possible to set up comparisons and contrasts with other periods or a broader range of material found within the Iron Age. The possibility exists that there were active rules governing the deposition of objects that meant fine metalwork very rarely ended up in settlements and little pottery is to be found in hoards of bronze or iron. This shows the existence of rules or norms surrounding the exceptional deposition of metal objects. We also wonder how far increased numbers of objects entering the archaeological record were due to higher levels or production and circulation (for instance, the much-discussed ‘fibula-event horizon’ of the first century BC) or to changes in depositional practice. For example, there is a number of large hoards of mixed metalwork and other materials that appear to date between AD 40–60. Was this deposition related to the Conquest and if so in what sort of way?

Depositional practices (or their lack) are always important, but we need also to attend to the nature of the materials themselves. We need to be aware that substances we group together may not have been categorised in the same manner in the Iron Age. Here, our category of metal might be suspect, making us wonder whether bronze and iron were seen as equivalent substances. Bronze needed trade links to bring together the various components of the alloy and consequently had particular social as well as chemical requirements. Bronze could also turn from solid to liquid and back to a solid state, something not possible with iron in Europe until the early modern period. Bronze also did not decay in the same manner as iron once in the ground. Was its lack of decay and the possibility of becoming liquid, something that bronze shared with silver and gold, both of which see a resurgence of use in the late Iron Age after some centuries absence? Iron is a reluctant technology, being found in Britain from at least 1000 BC, but not becoming common until 200 years later. Even then iron did not so much replace bronze as complement it and the relationship between the two materials would bear much more study (both Bradley 2007 and Hingley 2006 have started to explore the possible differences between iron and bronze, but much more could be done). If it is true that iron and bronze did not naturally fit within the category of metal, then objects containing both substances might well have been of great and multiple importance.

There may well have been rules governing the deposition of objects and as Evans (1989) has pointed out there might also have been rules governing what sorts of decoration could be applied to what sorts of objects in what might have been a fairly plain world. But it might also have been true that complex objects were able to rewrite the rules, so that a single understanding could never apply. This may well have pertained in the case of complicated items with many components and intricate abstract or figurative decoration. The decoration of Celtic art has always eluded simple interpretation, there being debates as to how far it is figurative or not (see Joy, this volume on issues of meaning and Fitzpatrick 2007 for an interesting argument concerning some of the possible figures on shield bosses and handles). These debates between aficionados of Celtic art in the present may actually mirror those between people in the Iron Age, in that part of the role of the most finely decorated material might have been to create a state of ambiguity in which different readings of the same piece was easily possible. Such discussions immediately raise the question of whether this material was art? For us, as we shall argue below, this material is not about meaning, but more to do with creating effects of both sensory and social kinds.

But *is it art?*

The complexity of many objects, the fact that some needed considerable skill to make, together with their often intricate decorations, have led to the conclusion that this was art. From Arthur Evans' 1895 Rhind Lectures, entitled 'The Origins of Celtic art', this material was both labelled art and was seen as a link to the higher civilizations of the Mediterranean, most specifically the Etruscans (Evans' unpublished lectures are held in the Evans Archive in the Ashmolean Museum). The major mid-century figure who established further the mode of study of Celtic art was, of course, Paul Jacobsthal who was well-versed in Classical art and the modes of understanding forms, decorations and pattern-making (Jacobsthal 1944). His terminology of Early and Waldalgesheim Styles (equivalent to La Tène A and B – 475 to 250 BC) and the Sword or Plastic Styles (of La Tène C – 250 BC onwards) still survives in vestigial form in later schemes. These most obviously include Jope (2000), whose work was conceived as a complement to Jacobsthal, and the Megaws (1986, 1989). Ian Stead (1996) also employed similar methodologies of trait comparison and extended Jacobsthal's chronological scheme into the late Iron Age when most of the British material is found. One can discern other approaches and indeed a rather more indigenous tradition in the work of Cyril Fox (1958) which took a rather different view on the manner in which this material could be judged as art – 'Early Celtic art is distinctive;

technique and design in gold, bronze and iron are often masterly, but there is nothing of “Fine Art” about it; the incised patterns and the relief ornament are on purposeful things – torcs and brooches and bracelets, weapons and drinking vessels, for example. It was not only a decorative art; useful things were well-shaped, with a sense of style, so a beautiful or well-balanced form often sufficed, satisfying the bronze worker’s sense, as it does ours’ (Fox 1958: v).

Although there has been constant use of the word ‘art’ in reference to fine metalwork, few have attempted a definition of the term. The Megaws, more courageous than most, go for ‘beyond function’ (see their chapter below). This implies a rather functionalist definition of function, containing the view that a swirling, vegetal decoration running down the blade of a sword does not give that sword a more effective cutting edge or make it easier to heft and wield. This might be our commonsense view of the matter, but does not necessarily accord with late prehistoric notions of efficacy or cause and effect. For people in the Iron Age, although we cannot know this, decoration might have been specifically functional. In any case, we are inclined to take a view which looks not so much at function but rather at efficacy; investigating what objects of particular forms and types of decoration could do in terms of creating and shaping human experience and social relations between people. In making such a move we are following recent trends within anthropology which focus not on what objects mean, but on what they do in shaping relationships between people (see Gell 1998 for a polemical rehearsal of this position). We see such a move as a positive shift away from an emphasis on meaning, which is in any case hard to know, to a stress of effect (see Giles, this volume). There has also been a drawn out and sometimes productive debate in anthropology as to whether art or aesthetics is a more conducive conceptual starting point for productive analysis (see Gell 1998 again, also Ingold 1996, Banks and Morphy 1999). The argument against either term is that they are too culturally loaded, freighted down with western preconceptions concerning material and visual culture. This is undoubtedly true (as it is of all terms) but we feel that the idea of aesthetics can be freed from notions of refinement and beauty to look at the sensory appeal that objects have and through the senses the emotional impacts they are likely to create (see Gosden 2004 for a longer rehearsal of this argument). The key link is between the formal characteristics of objects (their morphology and decoration) and their impact on people which then gives content to social relations. In archaeology, we may never know the specific impacts that individual objects had, but can discuss this in general terms looking at the objects themselves, the materials from which they are made and their occurrences in archaeological contexts (Garrow and Gosden in prep. will follow through these approaches in more detail). An approach which focuses on the impact that objects have on people is likely also to explore the active role of objects in shaping and channelling human relationships.

An important part of the impact of objects derived from their styles, which changed through time. We both do and do not believe in the six-style model developed by Stead and refined by others. The different styles can definitely be distinguished and appear in Britain in something of a sequential order, as British communities participate in the creation of new forms of objects. However, styles seem to accumulate, rather than simply replace each other, so that different styles may be found on the same object. Such accumulation fits in with our overall feeling that Celtic art concerns the generation of variety, making objects with lots of possible significances and requiring different forms of understanding. The accumulative nature of style is reinforced by the fact that some objects are already old when deposited, possibly having been in circulation for two centuries or more (and hence up to eight human generations). The combination of older objects with long biographies and newer objects with elements of older styles would have created a complicated universe of objects by the decades before the Roman conquest, which were to take on new sets of valences in the first century AD.

Some broad changes probably can be discerned, so that large impressive objects connected to the human body and display (such as shields, swords and helmets) may have been most prevalent before 100/50 BC, connected with various forms of personal presentation and fighting. There is a shift later on to smaller objects for the human body and horse gear (see Davis and Gwilt this volume), although some objects continue throughout the period of interest here, notably the sword (although there are changes in the way that swords are decorated, with earlier periods seeing overall decoration and later examples being only partially decorated or undecorated). Romano-British Celtic art has some characteristics of its own, such as multi-coloured glass work, with a continuing focus on smaller objects now to do with grooming and presenting the human body (although these are interesting by virtue of their forms, not all are decorated; see Eckhardt this volume) The prevalence of metal work in this tradition on northern Roman forts is of great interest, open to a variety of interpretations including the possibility that ‘Roman’ (i.e. non-British) soldiers were playing with local identities, or alternatively trying to submerge these by burying local materials within forts (Hunter, this volume).

To give some sense of how some aspects of our approach might work in practice, let us look at a brief example. The Kirkburn sword (Stead 2006, no. 172) was a complex construction which it is worth looking at in some detail (Figure 1.1 gives some impression of the handle of the sword and the upper part of the scabbard). The sword has an iron blade some 697 mm long (obscured by the scabbard from which it cannot be removed due to corrosion). The sword has a handle made of multiple components which protrudes from the scabbard which is made of a decorated front plate of bronze and a rear plate of iron, with a suspension loop to attach it to a belt probably made of animal skin. The lower part of the scabbard is covered in a chape which has enamelled glass decoration. The handle of the sword is especially complicated. In its upper part (or pommel) it is composed of an iron frame containing a piece of carved horn through which iron roundels have been fastened, separated from the horn by bronze washers. These roundels were covered with sheet iron coated with red glass, applied in a softened state to a roughened (or keyed) surface. The handle itself is a cylinder of horn also covered in sheet iron with cells excised which were filled with enamel using a pattern different on the forward facing side of the handle from that nearer the human body. The bottom of the hilt and the top of the scabbard also have roundels covered in red glass.

Below these, the outer face of the scabbard, made of bronze, is covered with so-called tendril and leaf decoration engraved onto the surface of the plate, terminating in curved triangular decorations on one side, but forming a continuous curved tendril on the other linking the design along the whole length of the scabbard. The bottom of the scabbard, known as the chape, is rather corroded now but has a circular shape, which was once covered in red glass.

The sword and scabbard condense many histories, some local to them, others from long ago and far away. It had a complex history as can be seen from a number of repairs. At some stage the front and back scabbard plates were split longitudinally and then rejoined; on the back iron plate riveting was used which was much cruder than the original work. To split a scabbard without destroying it would have required much skill as well as being a violent act. It is worth noting in passing that a small number of swords and other objects were ‘killed’ before deposition by bending or breaking, acts which often required metalworking skills possessed only by a few. In the case of the Kirkburn sword, violence was acted on it at some point during its life cycle rather than at its end. There were other forms of damage to the scabbard deriving from more general use which had also been repaired. The chape has also had a half-plate added to it as a repair, with a slightly different decoration from the original piece. These repairs and the gap in time between production and burial indicate a long and complex biography linking a number of human generations, with the sword and scabbard a possibly important link in generating human genealogies. The splitting of the scabbard and other aspects of its story might well have acted as a mnemonic for stories to be maintained and told, a key material prompt to an oral culture.

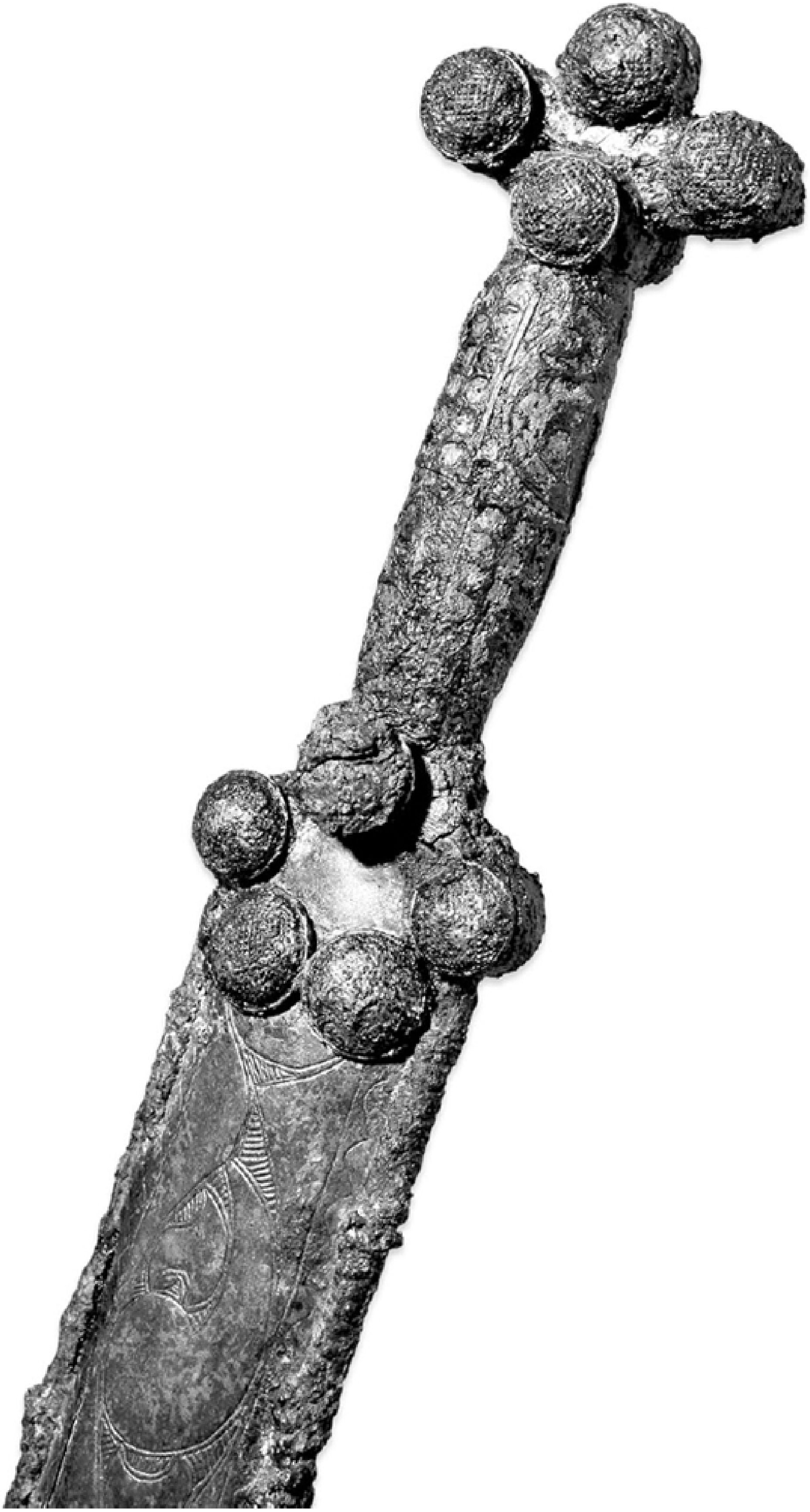

Figure 1.1. The upper part of the Kirkburn sword. © Copyright the Trustees of The British Museum. Reproduced in colour on page 219

The Kirkburn sword is one of three which are so similar in the details of the roundels on the handle, enamelling, length of blade and decoration that they were almost certainly produced in the same workshop and probably by one person. The other two swords were from the burial site of Wetwang Slack, a few miles from Kirkburn, in burials of men with carts or chariots (Stead 2006, nos 173 and 174). Unlike Kirkburn these swords have little evidence of repair and may have been placed in graves much closer to their production date of 250 BC. Although the Kirkburn sword burial did not contain a cart there were similarities in the burial rite. Both the body at Kirkburn and that at Wetwang with sword 173 had been speared after death (with three iron spears in the former case and seven in the latter). The Kirkburn burial contains pig joints, also found in chariot burials, but rarely in others. It was also located away from the main communal cemeteries, as were the Wetwang Slack chariot burials, in a small cemetery also containing a chariot burial. Together with the fact that the Kirkburn sword is one of the most ornate and complex objects found in Britain all these aspects mark the burial out as an exceptional event, perhaps helping to explain why the sword broke out of the normal rules and was deposited.

When deposited, the sword and scabbard could well have been older than all the people gathered at the burial, making present an earlier past. The sword type is distinctive, being relatively short, and it was worn across the back (see Giles this volume for evidence for this). The scabbard's decoration is a local variant of a widespread 'Scabbard style' found across large parts of Europe at this time. The sword and scabbard bring together issues of the widespread reach of style and form, but also their local remaking. The sword acted as a powerful condensation of histories and connections which would have had a powerful impact on those participating in the burial event. In many ways the sword's impact continues to this day.

Conclusions

This volume (and the conference from which it resulted) is one outcome of an Arts and Humanities Research Council-funded project called 'The

Technology of Enchantment' (after Gell 1998), awarded to Gosden, Hill and John Mack (Professor of World Art, University of East Anglia) with Garrow as the researcher on the project. The project attempts to move away from a consideration of metalwork simply as art towards a broader understanding of the sensory and social impact of material culture in general. It will run for three years (2005–2008) and will bring together both archaeological and anthropological perspectives. This volume results from a conference organised as part of the project in Oxford in November 2006 which aimed to gather together as broad a series of approaches to early Celtic art as possible. Many of the papers given at the conference are published here, although sadly it has not been possible to include any of the contributions which looked specifically at the making of objects.

Our lines of argument put us in danger of doing away with the subject of our research, namely Celtic art. We have argued against a notion of art, which can be more helpfully replaced with a notion of aesthetics, focussing on what objects do to people's senses, emotions and relations with each other. We have not entered the rather fraught debates over the Celts, as these arguments are now well-rehearsed (e.g. Collis 2003, Cunliffe 2003). Suffice it to say that identity at any one time was likely to have varied a lot with age, gender, social standing and the area where people lived, so that any one label is not especially helpful, when understanding variety is a key aim. The same is definitely true of Roman or even Romano-British, where a simple hybrid designation is not enough to help us understand the constant and complex renegotiations of identity that occurred in Britain from the first century AD onwards. We have also started to disaggregate our material, opening up the possibility that iron may have been very different to bronze (although bronze *might* have shared characteristics with gold and silver). The status of colourful liquid/solids such as glass also needs thinking about. We are not convinced that all or most of the material was produced by specialists and making objects might have been important markers of a life course, to the same degree, but in a different manner, to using or throwing them away. The existence of manufacturing debris on ordinary settlements gives us pause for thought here.

We have stressed that we are chasing a ghost, as the material ending up as archaeological evidence is clearly a small fraction of what might once have been in circulation. While this is true to some degree of all classes of archaeological evidence, fine metalwork might be closer to wood or textiles in its rarity, than it is to pottery or bone. This means that the material that did end up in bogs, rivers, hoards or graves was important then and especially important now, a small part standing in for a much larger whole. The corpus of material also needs distinguishing in terms of its possible social effects. Large eye-catching objects, such as shields or helmets, played a very different role potentially to pins or terrets (see Spratling this volume). There was regional variation in the use of objects at any one time (as a glance at Garrow's maps shows) and changes over time.

Having deconstructed our subject matter are we left with a subject to study which is separate to some degree from other aspects of our evidence? The answer is 'yes'. Metalwork is not commonly found on ordinary settlements or hillforts (although some of it was clearly made there). It did require some effort to obtain the raw materials and a degree of skill to make (even if many might have been able to acquire these skills given sufficient social need). It was attractive to the eye, ear and body more generally. Particular sets of practices seem to have been involved with making, exchanging, using and throwing away fine metal work and it was important in the creation of relations both near and far. Such factors make it potentially very diagnostic of the social world of the late Iron Age and early Romano-British periods; times when society was fast-changing and hard for us to categorise and to understand. Celtic art is hard to understand, categorise or analyse. Ultimately it might be that the strangeness of this material helps key us into the strangeness of British society at the very end of prehistory.

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2

The space and time of Celtic Art: interrogating the ‘Technologies of Enchantment’ database

Duncan Garrow

Introduction

The ‘Technologies of Enchantment’ project (see Gosden and Hill this volume) seeks, at its broadest, to understand material culture, aesthetics and power during the Later Iron Age and Early Roman periods in Britain. The central element of this research is a group of objects which has come to be known as Celtic Art. Since its inception the project has set out to achieve an understanding of this specific subset of material culture via a sequential route of inquiry. The first step was to develop a digital database of all of the objects in Britain which could be described as Celtic Art, gathering together large amounts of material from a wide array of sources in an accessible and easily analysable form. The second step, based on the first, was to describe changes within this material through space and time. The third step, building on that understanding, is to place the changes observed firmly within their social and political context. The fourth, ultimately, will be to investigate what these objects ‘did’: the role they played in power relations and the aesthetic effects they had on people at that time. This paper focuses primarily on the database. Its intention is to outline the processes through which the database was constructed, and to highlight some of the key patterns made visible during analysis. In doing so a number of further questions are raised, including what exactly we define as ‘Celtic Art’, and what kind of interpretations analysis of this kind, at the scale of Britain as a whole, allows.

The database

In creating a database of Iron Age/Romano-British Celtic Art, the project had two aims. The first was to establish a comprehensive understanding of the material at a basic level: what kinds of objects we are actually talking about and where they have been found. Previously, details of this rich body of material remained relatively widely scattered within a variety of published and unpublished sources (see below and Appendix 2.1). In constructing a full catalogue of Celtic Art-related material in Britain, we sought to provide a firm empirical foundation on which to build interpretations. Moreover, by analysing these data using GIS, it was expected that previously unseen patterns would emerge, enabling a new level of understanding. The second aim, an outcome of the first, was to provide a readily-available, digital resource for others to use in future research.

The process of constructing the database began with the three main corpora of Celtic Art in Britain: Martyn Jope's relatively recently published, but not as recently compiled, *Early Celtic Art of the British Isles* (2000), Morna MacGregor's *Early Celtic Art in north Britain* (1976) and Mansel Spratling's unpublished PhD thesis *Southern British decorated bronzes of the Late Pre-Roman Iron Age* (1972). Each of these works contains an impressive catalogue of objects. Both Spratling and MacGregor attempted to make their catalogues as inclusive as possible, but Jope – the most up-to-date of the three – did not, as he was concerned primarily with giving an impression of the range of material, and with charting the development of the Celtic Art 'style'. In combination, the lists within these three studies provided an extremely strong foundation for our database. Further information, taken from a variety of other sources including the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS), museum records and books/papers (published between Spratling/MacGregor and Jope, and since 2000) completed the survey; these are listed in Appendix 2.1.

The process of turning the information gleaned from these works into an electronic database involved transferring as much relevant information as possible from them into a spreadsheet format. For the sake of openness and clarity, the process is described in detail in Appendix 2.2. The information relating to each object divides approximately into four broad fields:

- object description
- location
- sources/references
- date

In contrast to the first three descriptive fields which proved relatively straightforward to compile, a considerable degree of extra research was usually required in order to complete the *date* section of the database. The dating of Celtic Art is a key issue which the Technologies of Enchantment project hopes to address. Work over the past century has focused almost entirely on establishing a stylistic chronology for Celtic Art in Britain (e.g. Fox 1958; Stead 1985; Jope 2000). However, crucially, this chronology has not been independently tested. In order to establish the date of objects in a more strictly archaeological way, the context of each item within the database was assessed for potential 'datability'. Every object thought to be in a context with datable associated finds was then investigated in further detail within the original published source (usually a site report). Where possible, the date(s) of any associated material(s) – usually pottery, coins or brooches – were established. The breadth of the date ranges assigned by this means varied considerably according to the nature of the datable material. Objects found with Roman coins, for example, can often be dated to within a few years, but those found with pottery were sometimes only datable to a period of two or three centuries. A description of the character of these finds associations (i.e. the basis on which a date was ascribed) is also detailed in a separate column. It is important to bear in mind that in focusing on depositional context, we are of course necessarily dating a point in these objects' lives which is usually closer to their 'end' than to their manufacture or use.

As a result of the project's contextual dating programme, it proved possible to add a date range based on clear archaeological associations to the *date* column in over 20% of cases. In order to facilitate cross-comparison, these dates were then grouped into six broader phases (discussed in more detail below). It is worth noting that, in addition to this contextual dating assessment, a systematic radiocarbon programme is currently underway. When finished, full details of the programme – which will date over forty key pieces of Celtic Art – will be described, and the implications of its findings discussed, within a separate paper. Any dates obtained as a result, along with those previously secured by others, will of course be included in the database. Whilst it would have been beneficial to include these results in the chronological analysis detailed here, this simply is not possible as the work is not yet completed.

Defining 'Celtic Art'

Having described the character of the database and the types of information recorded, it is important now to consider the kinds of objects which were actually included within it. The fact that both 'Celtic' and 'Art' might be viewed as problematic terms in relation to this set of material has been discussed on many different occasions (e.g. Spratling 1972; Megaw and Megaw 2001; Harding 2007; MacDonald 2007; a number of papers in this volume). There are problems with the definition of 'Celts' in the present, their existence as a meaningful social identity in the past, and the relationship between these people (if they did indeed exist) and the set of material culture which has been termed 'Celtic' Art (see for example Collis 2003; Cunliffe 2003; Harding 2007). Similarly, the concept of 'Art' comes with a set of meanings within our own culture which may not reflect those of other cultures, either in the present or past (see for example Gell 1998, Ch. 1; Megaw and Megaw 2005, 8; Spratling this volume). Consequently, it might thus argued that the term cannot not be applied in any meaningful sense to the material under consideration. In this paper, and within the Technologies of Enchantment project as a whole, the term Celtic Art has nevertheless been maintained, despite an awareness of these problems and general sympathy with the main arguments against using it. This is perhaps partly out of mischief, but is also because other terms which might be used instead – 'La Tène Art' or 'Later Iron Age/Early Roman metalwork' – are in their own ways equally problematic or inappropriate.

The persistence of the term Celtic Art despite these various problems might be viewed as a sign of coherence within this body of material. However, in fact, the classification of objects as Celtic Art has been far from straightforward. While many of the classic pieces – the Battersea shield, the Snettisham torcs, the Desborough mirror, etc. – are instantly recognisable as part of the 'style', it becomes steadily more difficult to classify objects as such the further you get away from these core 'masterpieces'. It is notable how few definitions of Celtic Art have been attempted in the past, even within key texts on the subject (see for example Harding 2007). Where definitions have been given, these have generally been left rather vague; Megaw and Megaw, for example, define ‘art’ as “elaboration that goes beyond what is required for simple function”, leaving the ‘Celtic’ part intact despite an awareness of the issues surrounding it (2005, 7–8). Interestingly, one of the key defining features of Celtic Art is not a positive attribute, but a negative one – it has been defined *in opposition to* ‘Classical’ art (e.g. Jacobsthal 1944). Unfortunately, even that distinction begins to break down once its supposed Greek and Etruscan origins are remembered. Equally, other defining factors which might also be invoked – such as the use of naturalistic, semi-abstract and abstract designs; of two-dimensional and three-dimensional decoration; and of human, animal and plant imagery – are, necessarily, inclusive and broad rather than exclusive and specific. To borrow Gosden and Head’s point made in relation to ‘landscape’ (1994), Celtic Art has proved to be a “usefully ambiguous concept”.

The definition of Celtic Art becomes even more difficult to tie down once the objects which have been included in previous corpora are examined in detail. Alongside many of the well known pieces – which, given the problems of defintion discussed above, are perhaps best described as decorated in the ‘swirly’ style (Figure 2.1) – are numerous undecorated items. In Jope’s book, for example, we find plain tankards (Jope 2000, Plates 226–7), undecorated ‘horn caps’ (Pl. 303), simple bronze bowls (Pl. 307) and unornamented bracelets (Pl. 315). Similarly, in Spratling’s thesis, alongside elaborately decorated flat-ring terrets (Section 2.2.7), we find ‘ribbed’ (2.2.3) and ‘simple’ (2.2.1) styles; and in MacGregor’s catalogue there are plain bracelets (nos 227 and 230) to match the heavily decorated massive armlets (nos 231–250). It might well be argued that these undecorated items would be unlikely to be considered Celtic Art (in the true spirit of the term) if viewed in isolation.

The central problem of definition in this case is arguably down to two things: the breadth of meaning of the term ‘art’ in the present, and the wide variety of media used to ‘decorate’ these objects in the past. In some ways, incised patterns (such as those seen on the Thames spearhead and the Desborough mirror in Figure 2.1) are perhaps the easiest to view as ‘art’, or at least ‘decoration’, being two-dimensional and thus closest to our concept of painting or drawing. However, similar patterns can of course also be incorporated three-dimensionally into objects through techniques such as casting or repoussé work (such as that seen on the Waterloo helmet in Figure 2.1). Once three-dimensional forms like these are incorporated, it is only a short step before the elaborate ‘ears’ on winged terrets, for example, can be viewed as ‘art’. And once this kind of object is included, it is only a small step further to seeing the much simpler three-dimensional forms of ribbed terrets as ‘art’ as well.

In order address these tricky issues of definition, it was decided that the database should, at least in the first instance, be inclusive rather than exclusive. It was decided that every object which had featured in previous catalogues of Celtic Art would be entered. In order to get an insight into the broader spectrum of comparable material culture around at the time, three further catalogues – which did include many relevant objects, but did not necessarily focus exclusively on those which could be described as Celtic Art – were also included: Palk’s two surveys of horse gear (1984, 1992) and Stead’s catalogue of swords and scabbards (2006). The undecorated examples within these were incorporated into the database on the grounds that at least a proportion of all horse gear and of all swords would normally be classed as Celtic Art. Contemporary object types which would not (such as currency bars) were not included. The project database thus occupies the middle ground. It does not include ‘Later Iron Age/Early Roman-British metalwork’ in its entirety, but nor does it focus only on ‘artefacts adorned with curvilinear motifs’. This standpoint was adopted intentionally. The category of Celtic Art is a slippery and hazy-edged one, and it was deemed the most appropriate from which to tackle the subject head on. From such a position of inclusivity, it was anticipated that questions such as which objects actually were decorated in the classic ‘swirly’ Celtic Art style, and which were not, could be answered. Clearly, as a consequence of the sources used to construct it, the database will probably be more comprehensive in relation to certain object types (e.g. horse gear, swords) than others. It is worth noting, however, that horse gear and swords are amongst the most difficult objects to keep track of, as there are simply so many of them (see Figure 2.2). ‘Horn-caps’ or mirrors, for example, are much less numerous and thus more likely to be known already.

Figure 2.1. Examples of objects with classic 'swirly' decoration (top to bottom: the Waterloo helmet, the Thames spearhead, the Desborough mirror). © Copyright the Trustees of The British Museum. Reproduced in colour on page 220

It is also important to point out which objects were not included in the database. In order to limit the scope of the study to some degree, as well as for practical reasons such as ease of access to material, items from England, Scotland and Wales were included, but those from Ireland were not. While Ireland has a very rich body of evidence with many parallels in Britain, it has often been studied separately (Jope and Palk included Irish material within their studies but MacGregor, Spratling and Stead did not). The thousands of Celtic coins known in Britain already have an up-to-date catalogue in the form of the Celtic Coin Index (http://www.writer2001.com/cciwriter2001/index.htm). Consequently, these were not included. Celtic coin distributions are nevertheless discussed in relation to other material below. Nor were brooches and pins included, although, again, their distribution relative to other material is considered below (the project initially sought to bring the study of brooches up to date alongside the other material through a PhD studentship, but unfortunately this did not reach fruition). Finally, it is important to mention that the database focuses exclusively on metalwork. While Celtic Art is found occasionally on pottery, bone and other materials, these have not been included. Ideally, other object types and materials would have been incorporated more fully. However, primarily due to the limited timescale of the project, their inclusion remains a task for the future.

Interpreting the patterns

In total, 2582 objects feature within the database. Figure 2.2 gives a breakdown of numbers by object type (these are listed in full in Appendix 2.3). It shows very clearly that items of horse harness are extremely numerous, with terrets, horse bits, linch pins and 'general' horse gear (i.e. harness junctions, strap mounts, etc.) filling four of the top seven places. Alongside these, swords and torcs/collars (the vast majority of which were found at Snettisham) are found in large numbers, alongside the largely meaningless category of ‘other’ (which incorporates a wide variety of objects such as roundels, hanger/danglers and other miscellaneous items). The other items named specifically were: arm rings/armlets, daggers, shields, ‘horn caps’, mirrors, spoons, tankards, bowls/buckets/cauldrons, ornamental strips, and animal/human forms (‘horn caps’ and spoons were included as separate categories despite being found only in small numbers because they are usually considered to be ‘classic’ Celtic Art objects).

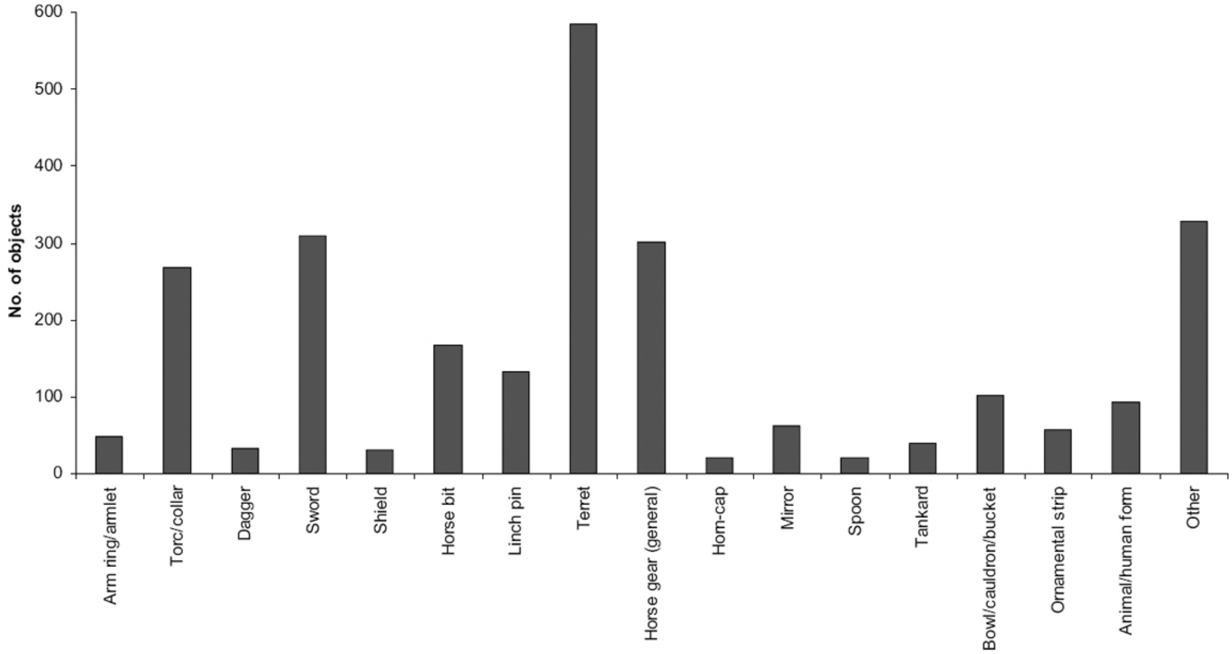


Figure 2.2. Quantities of different object types within the database. The figures given include fragments as well as complete objects; it is of course possible to distinguish these within the database if necessary

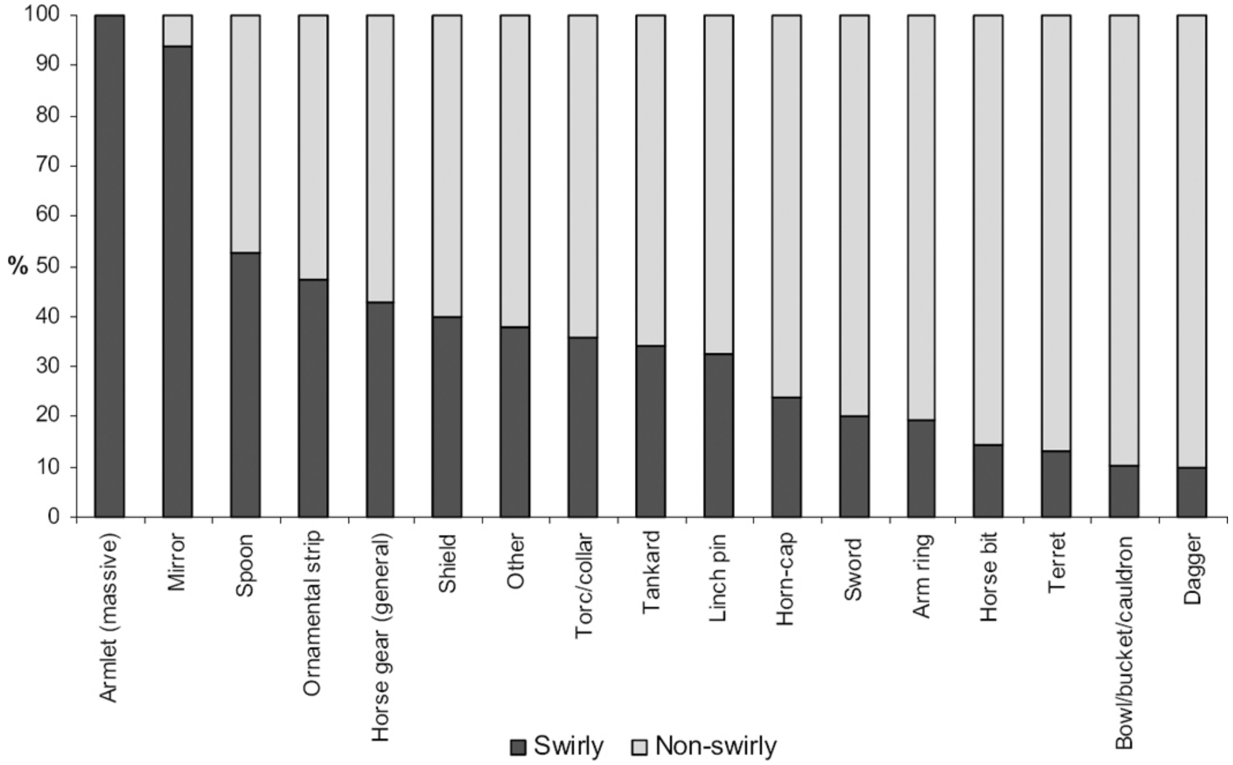


Figure 2.3. Proportions of object types with classic 'swirly' decoration

Figure 2.3 shows the proportions of different object types which were decorated in the classic 'swirly' Celtic Art style. There is no simple way of identifying 'swirly' decoration; this category was defined entirely subjectively through a visual survey of photographs and drawings of all of the objects. It shows very clearly that there was no uniformity in terms of which objects were decorated in this way. While some were always, or almost always, subject to decoration (massive armlets, mirrors), others were rarely decorated at all (terrets, buckets/cauldrons and daggers). Within the rest of this paper, a number of the other key patterns which emerged from analysis of this large body of information are discussed. With relatively limited space available, it is impossible to describe the full range of patterning. It is hoped, however, that the full range of possibilities that analysis of this sort offers is made clear. Once the database becomes publicly available on the internet at the end of the Technologies of Enchantment project, of course, anyone will be able to interrogate the data at will, bringing out previously unseen patterns of their own.

The spatial distribution of objects

Overall distributions

The distribution of all of the findspots included within the database is shown in Figure 2.4. While the overall distribution of Celtic Art has been discussed in the past by Fox (1958, xxv–xxvi) and Spratling (1972, 328–9), these discussions necessarily took place in a very different interpretive context, and without such a comprehensive catalogue of finds or the significant benefit of GIS. Perhaps the most striking aspect is that objects within the database are found *right across Britain*, from the Isles of Scilly in the south-west to Shetland in the northeast. Within this widespread overall distribution, however, there are nevertheless places which are particularly dense in finds, as well as distinct ‘blank’ areas.

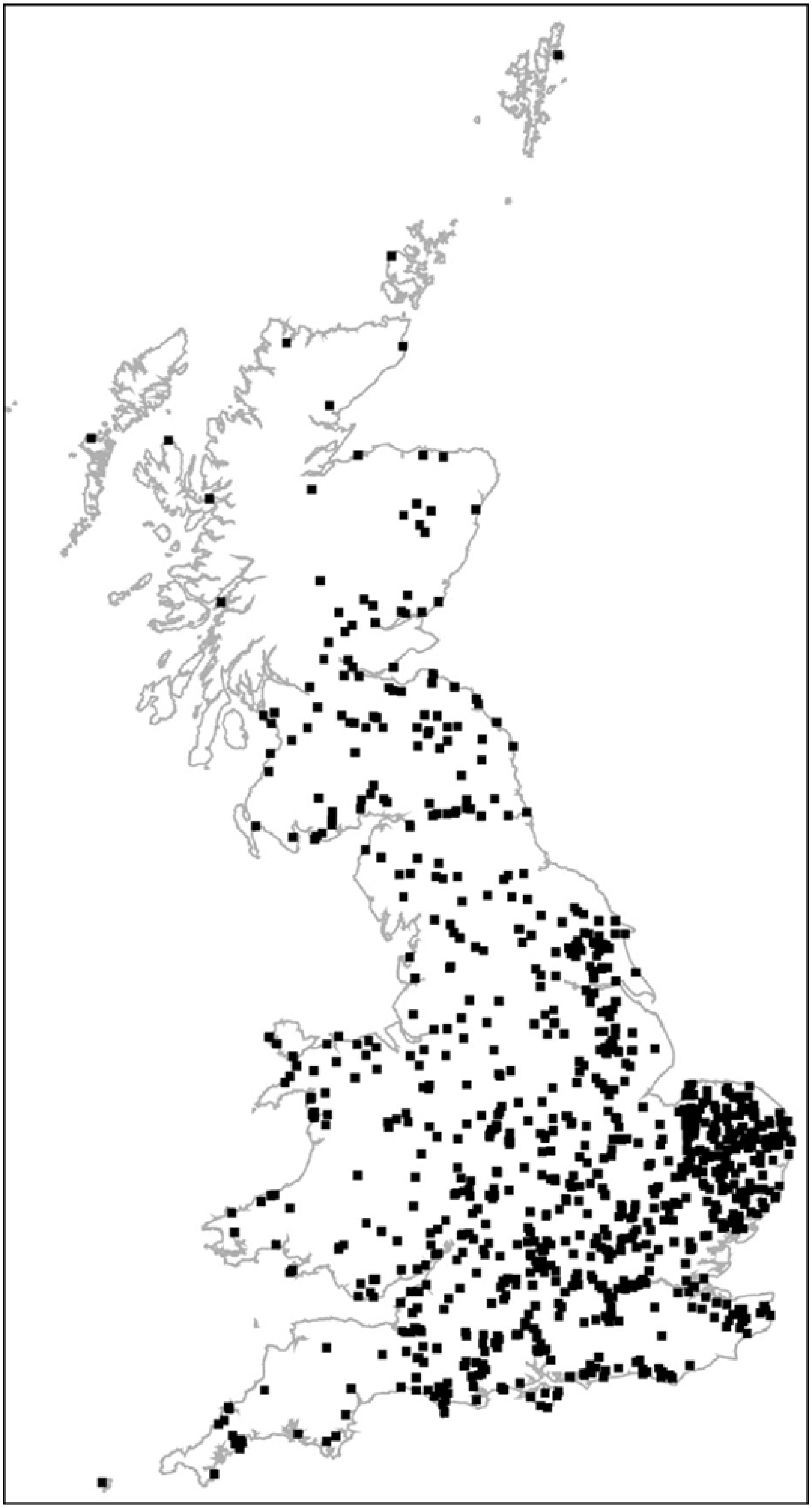


Figure 2.4. Overall distribution of findspots within the database

The highest density of findspots, in East Anglia, is very clearly visible. This regional hotspot might also be seen as the particularly pronounced peak of a generally denser, south-easterly distribution which runs in a rough crescent from Somerset through the midlands to East Yorkshire. While Figure 2.4 shows only findspots, Figure 2.5a incorporates the number of finds per site as well, depicting the ‘density’ of objects per 5km grid square. As a result, a subtly different image emerges: the south-eastern ‘crescent’ is, if anything, clearer to see, but at the same time individual sites with particularly large numbers of objects elsewhere become much more visible within the overall distribution. Within some of the more densely dotted areas, linear distributions of finds are just visible. These actually become much clearer once the distribution of other finds (particularly coins) are plotted as well (see Figure 2.6b); consequently, this patterning is discussed in more detail in the next section. A number of the most obvious ‘blank’ areas appear to be related to the character of Britain’s topography, generally corresponding closely with upland regions (a pattern previously recognised by Spratling: 1972, 329). Dartmoor/Exmoor, the Scottish highlands, and a large proportion of Wales, for example, are notable for their lack of objects (Figure 2.5b). It is worth bearing in mind, however, that not all such areas are blank: the Peak and Lake Districts, for example, produced a number of finds. By the same token, there is also a blank area in the Weald (covering parts of Kent, Surrey and Sussex) which does not obviously relate to high ground, although it is surrounded by hills (the Weald actually appears to have sparsely populated and relatively ‘blank’ archaeologically throughout much of prehistory (Spratling 1972, 330)).

Any discussion of finds distributions must of course take recovery factors into account as well as variations in depositional practice (the latter are discussed below). It is possible, for example, that the ‘blank’ areas on high ground may simply be a product of the fact that artefacts are much more likely to be found in the densely-occupied and heavily-ploughed lowlands than in the less-visited and largely undisturbed uplands. Equally, the high numbers of finds in Norfolk and Suffolk may simply be the result of a long-term tradition of co-operation between metal-detectorists and archaeologists in those counties (Hutcheson 2004;

Worrell 2007, 3). It is extremely difficult, when analysing evidence at this scale, to negate such biases of recovery in order to give a ‘true’ picture of the past. In the case of the upland moors/mountains, it might be reasonable to assume that fewer objects were deposited simply because people were not living in, or visiting, those areas on a regular basis. In the case of East Anglia, it is similarly difficult to gain a genuine impression of past depositional patterns, as Norfolk in particular has a much longer tradition of recording metal detected finds than many other counties.

Information collected in recent years as a result of the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) can help to address these issues to a certain extent. Figure 2.5c depicts in graphic form the effect these new finds have had within the database (PAS finds comprise 13% of the total). Broadly speaking, the overall pattern of PAS finds does fit very well with the general distribution; it has also filled in some previous gaps (e.g. in the West Midlands/Cheshire region and southern Suffolk). Using statistical information recorded by the PAS, it is also possible to assess the reliability of broader artefact distributions. For example, the success of the PAS in eastern England *is* likely to have skewed results to a certain extent: during 2005/6, almost four times the national average numbers of finds (from all periods) were recorded in Norfolk and Suffolk (PAS 2006, 113), a pattern seen in previous years as well. However, by comparing numbers of finds between regions, it is also possible to suggest that recovery factors in East Anglia have merely made clearer a ‘real’ differential distribution in the past. In London and the south-east, for example, a region where comparable quantities of metalwork have been found overall, there are still very few Celtic Art-related objects (even though many of the most famous objects have come from the Thames).

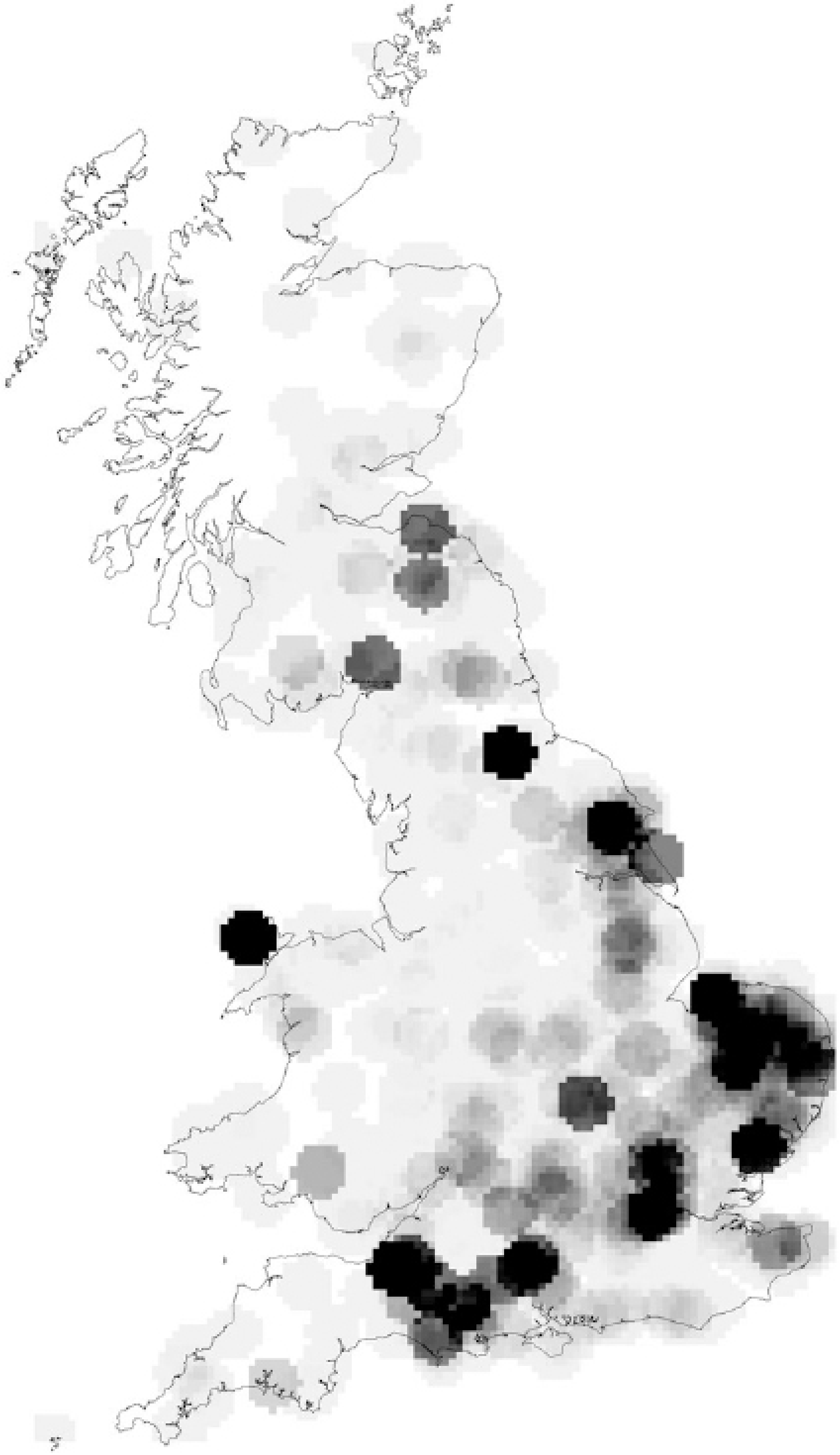


Figure 2.5a. 'Density' of objects per 5km grid square. In order to make densities fully visible at this scale, the value assigned to each 5km square is depicted as apixellated circle of 20 km radius around that square

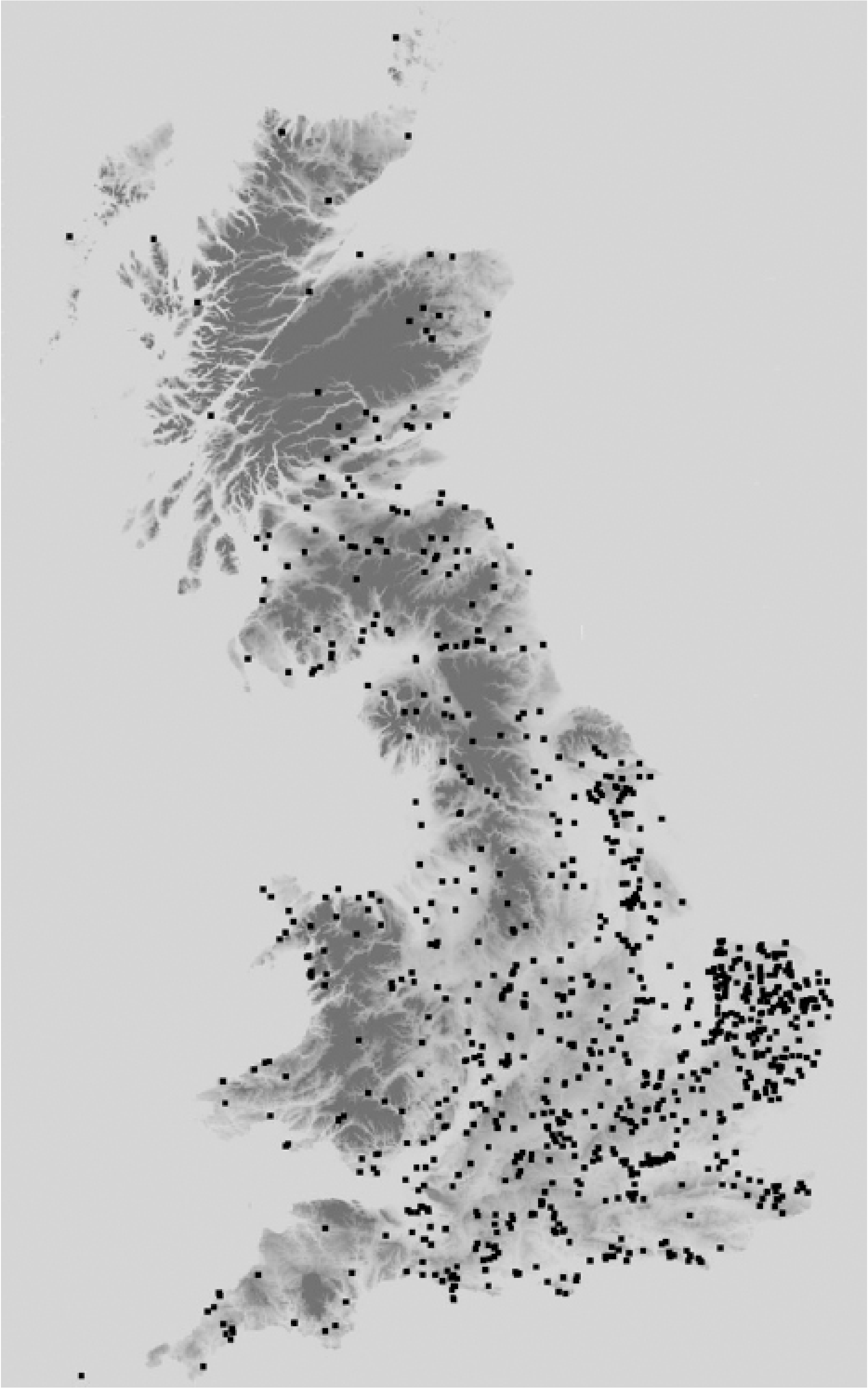


Figure 2.5b. Location of findspots in relation to topography (higher ground is darker)

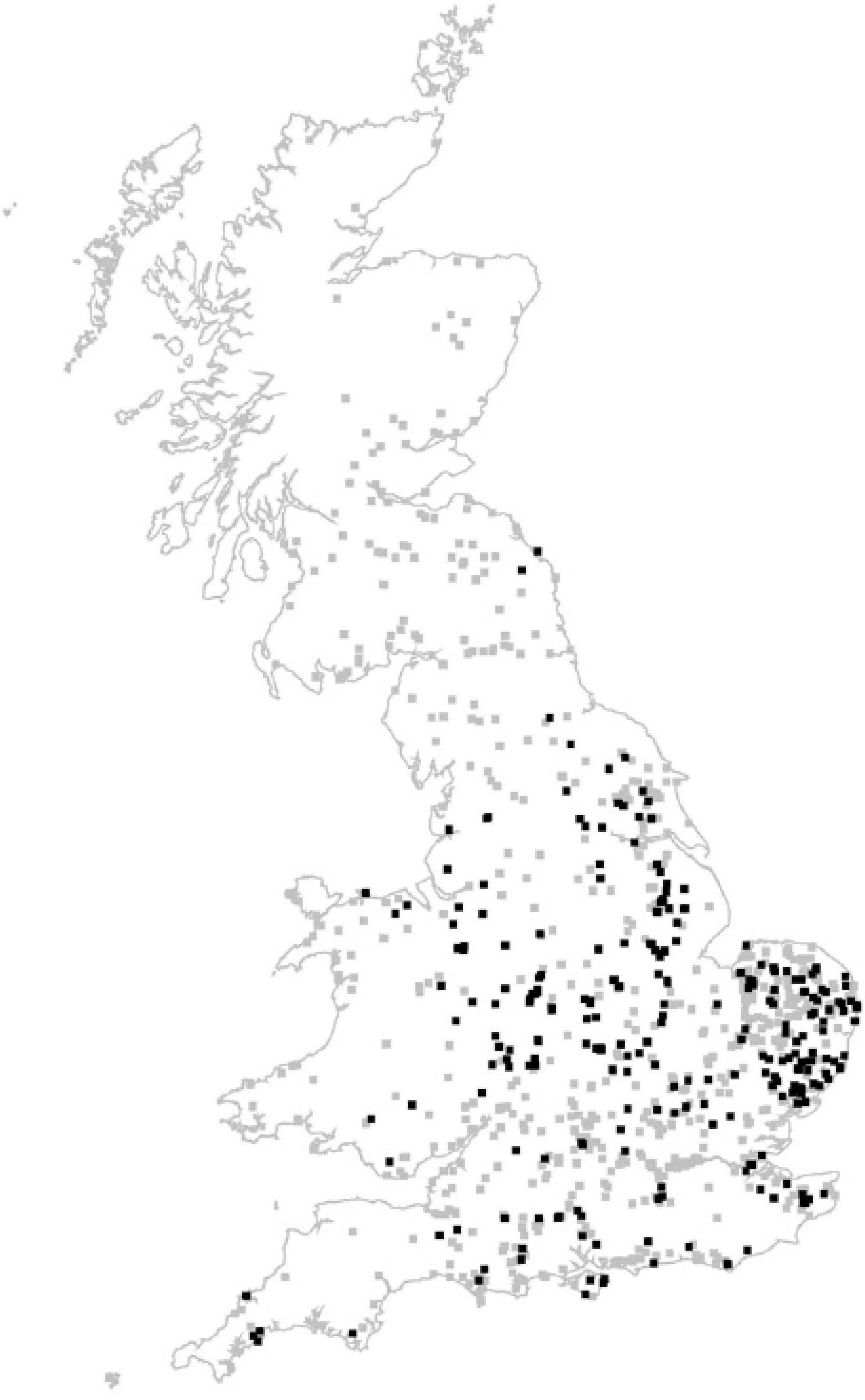


Figure 2.5c. Distribution of artefacts identified as a result of the PAS (black squares, all other finds in grey). Note that the PAS does not cover Scotland

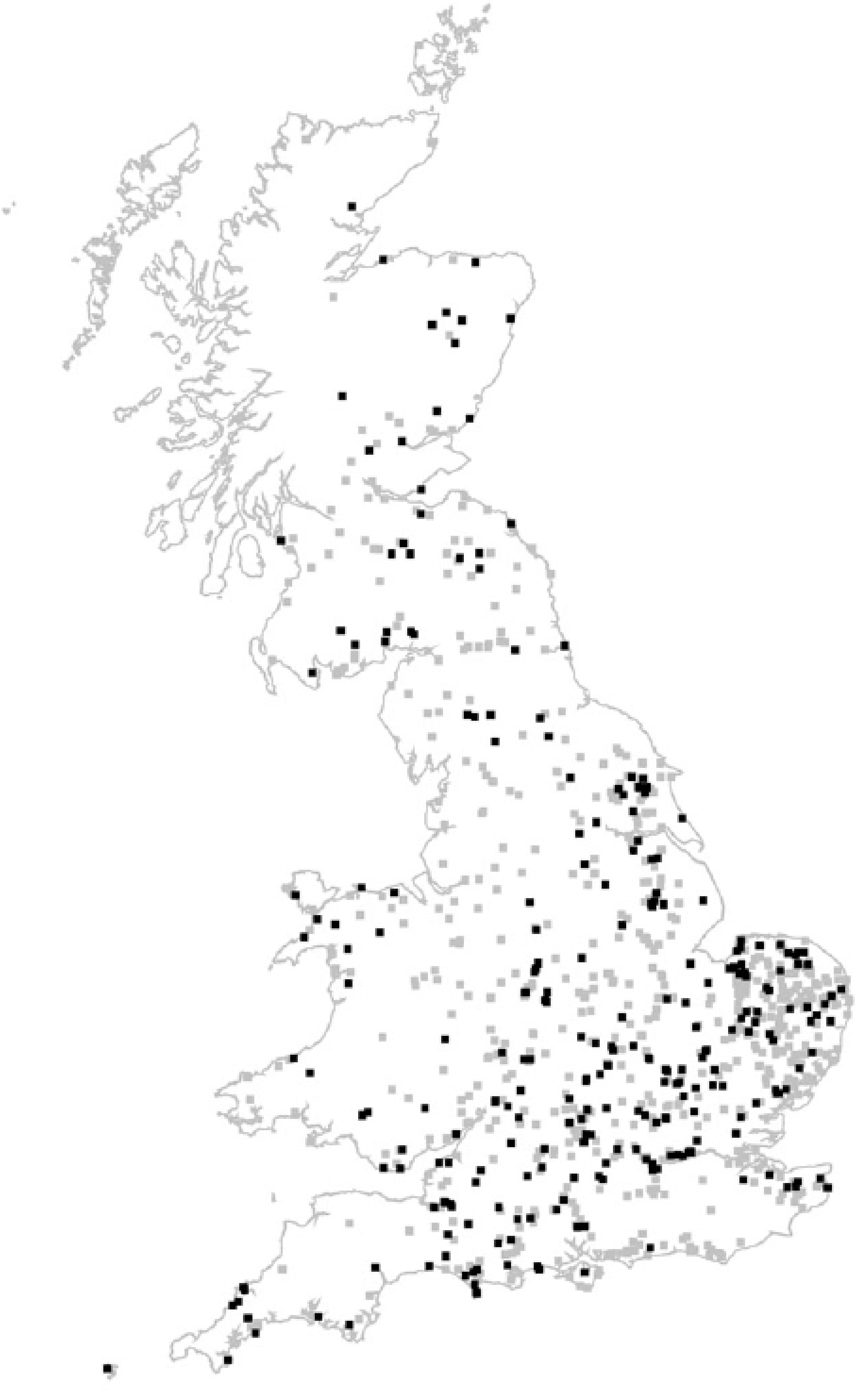


Figure 2.5d. Distribution of artefacts with ‘swirly’ decoration (black squares)

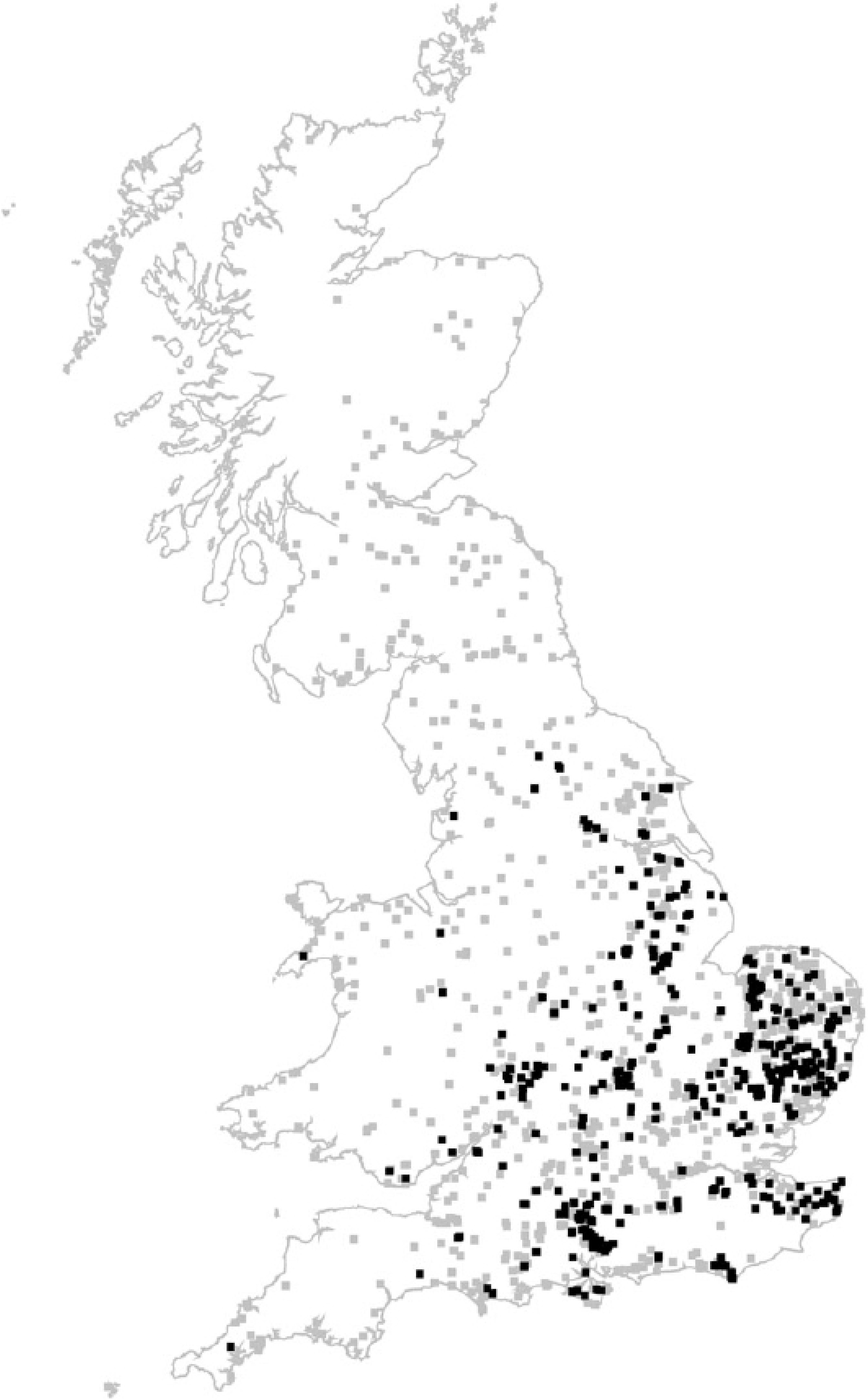


Figure 2.6a. Distribution of Iron Age brooches (black squares) in England and Wales. This plot incorporates only those brooches found as a result of the PAS; the conclusions drawn are thus provisional, while the distribution does not extend into Scotland

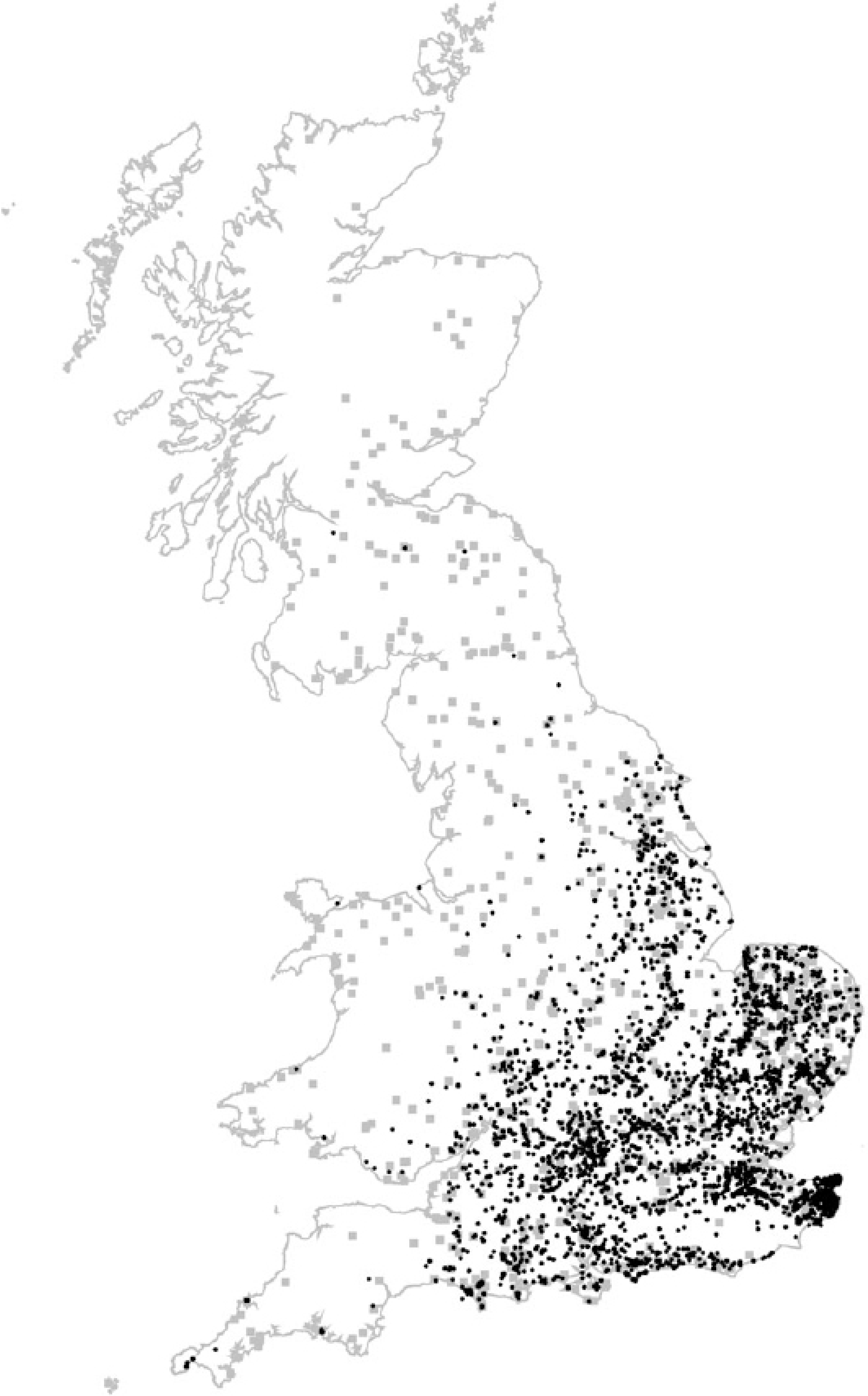


Figure 2.6b. Distribution of Iron Age coins (black dots) in relation to all objects within the database. Coin distribution kindly provided by Ian Leins in conjunction with the Celtic Coin Index

The process of distinguishing biases of recovery or deposition from 'real' patterns is undeniably a difficult one. While it is important not to ignore them, it is also important not to get too bogged down by them either – it is only ever possible to make interpretations within archaeology on the basis of the evidence which you have. It is important to make those interpretations rather than deferring judgement until the future in order to provide a narrative, against (or with) which future interpretations can work. In any case, using a combination of broader contextual evidence (such as the PAS evidence), detailed analyses of particular artefact distributions (see below) and reasonable judgement, it is possible to begin to interpret patterns with confidence (see also Hutcheson 2004). For instance, given the relatively low density of Iron Age settlement in upland areas of Britain, it does seem reasonable to assume that despite biases of recovery in the present, gaps in the distribution of objects in these areas may be a genuine reflection of past practice. If indeed people were living predominantly in low lying areas, it seems that they did not make special journeys into the uplands to deposit material, an unsurprising revelation in the case of small fragments perhaps, but a rather more revealing insight in the case of intentionally deposited material such as hoards.

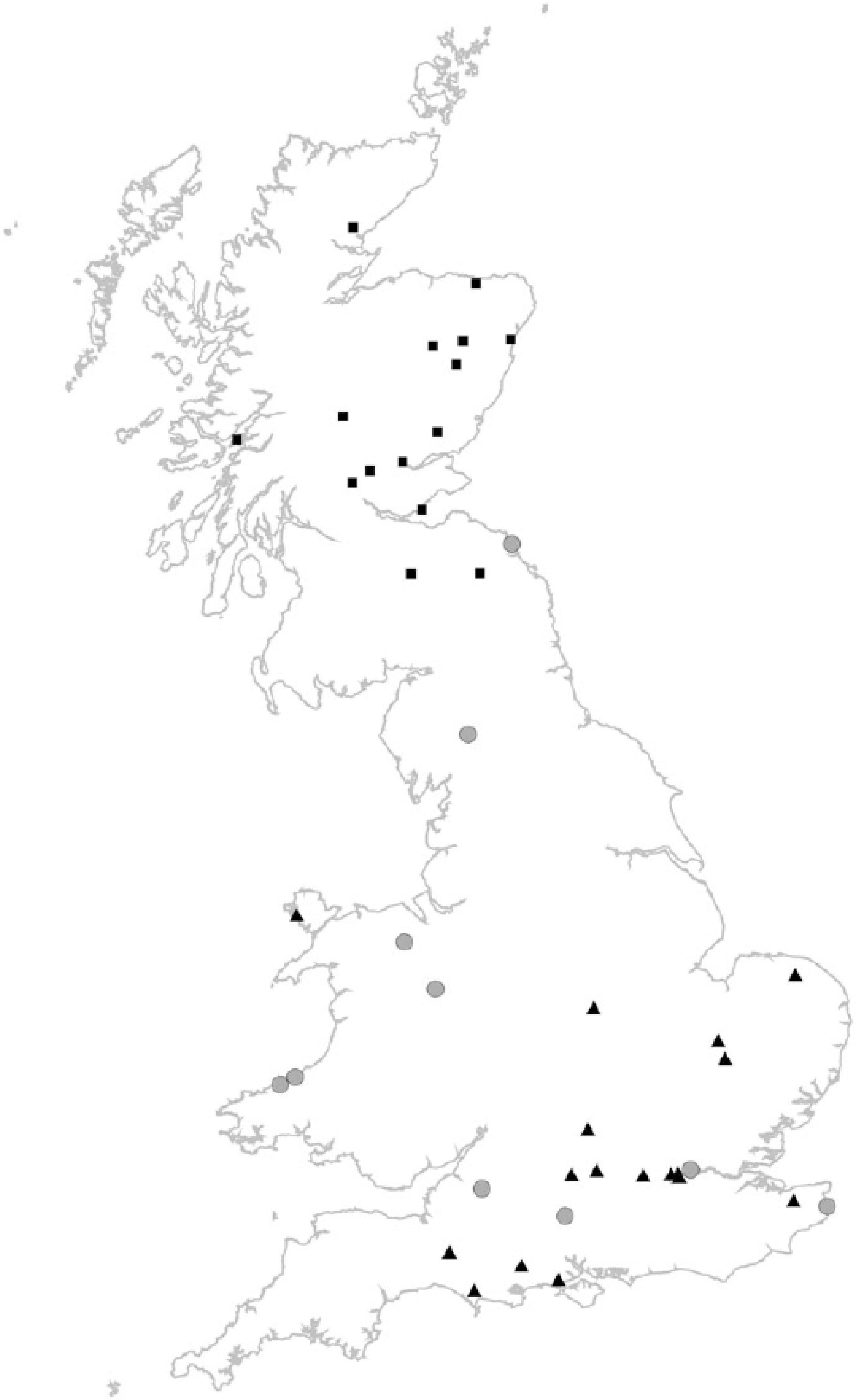


Figure 2.6c. Distribution of massive armlets (squares), horn caps (triangles) and spoons (circles)

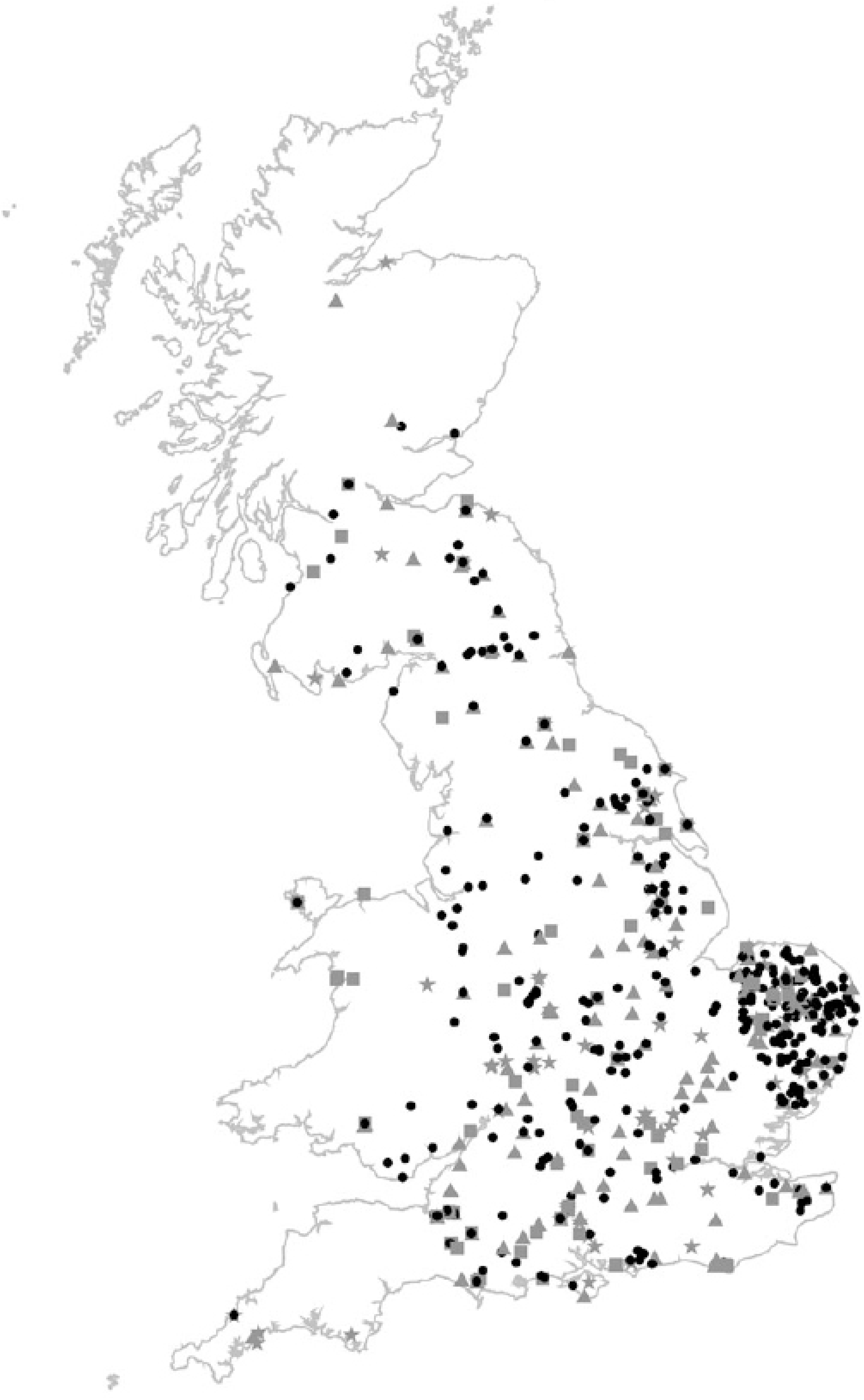


Figure 2.6d. Distribution of horse gear (one or more items): terrets (black circles), bridle bits (grey squares), linch pins (stars), and other horse gear (triangles)

Distributions of object types

Once the overall distribution of objects is broken down into different categories, a varied series of patterns emerges. Importantly, those items perhaps most clearly defined as Celtic Art – objects with classic 'swirly' decoration – have almost exactly the same distribution as the database as a whole (Figure 2.5d), suggesting that pieces decorated in this way were not restricted to particular regions. Interestingly, the distribution of Iron Age brooches recorded by the PAS also matches that of the database in general fairly closely (Figure 2.6a). The distribution of Celtic coins is, of course, restricted predominantly to the south-east of Britain. It is interesting to note, however, that within this region, the areas which have produced high densities of coins often appear to match closely those producing high densities of material generally (Figure 2.6b). This patterning suggests that the full spectrum of decorated metalwork was treated (whether in use, loss or intentional deposition) in similar ways at this time. As mentioned above, within the densest parts of the distribution plot, linear elements are discernible within the distribution of objects in general, and particularly Celtic coins. These linear distributions appear to relate closely to topography, mostly being situated along the interfaces between lowlands and uplands. It is possible, therefore, that they actually reflect more general settlement patterns as a whole (I. Leins pers. comm.).

Certain individual object categories (e.g. swords and tankards) are also found right across Britain. By contrast, others are restricted to specific regions (Figure 2.6c): massive armlets, for instance, display a distinctly northern distribution (a pattern recognised for some time), whilst 'horn caps' have an exclusively southern distribution (with the exception of Llyn Cerrig Bach, Anglesey being found only in southern England). Intriguingly, whilst the distribution of spoons is broad, these objects are found largely outside the crescentic 'core' of objects. It is not easy to interpret these patterns in any straightforward way, particularly as the problem of distinguishing between the *use*, the *deposition*, and the *recovery* of objects (discussed in the previous section) is pertinent here as well. However, in some cases it is nevertheless possible to move towards a fuller understanding of such regional variations. Massive armlets, for example, share many similarities of style and decoration with a number of other ‘massive’ objects (Hunter, this volume). These too are found almost exclusively in northern Britain, in a variety of different contexts; as a result, it is possible to conclude that their distribution in that region may be a consequence of ‘real’ patterns of use in the past rather than simply of depositional bias. This style of personal adornment, and/or of signifying authority power and wealth, does appear to have been confined to one specific region.

Intriguingly, while the category of ‘horse gear’ as a whole displays a very similar distribution to that of objects generally, once this broad category is broken down into individual object types, a rather different pattern emerges (Figure 2.6d). While most types (bridle bits, linch pins, etc.) are distributed relatively evenly across Britain, terrets are significantly denser in East Anglia than anywhere else. The fact that functionally-related objects such as horse bits and terrets were deposited differentially in different places is interesting. Two possible explanations for the discrepancy can be posited. The first is that chariots or carts were designed or used very differently in the area now known as East Anglia, leading to the largely inadvertant deposition of many more terrets. The second explanation is that, in the east, for some reason terrets were preferentially *selected for* deposition, being placed in the ground when other horse gear was not. Although it is essentially impossible to distinguish between these two options whilst working at such a broad scale, it might well be feasible to do so if a more detailed, regional study were undertaken.

Depositional contexts

One way in which the ‘biases’ surrounding the deposition of objects can be approached directly is through an assessment of the contexts in which they were found. In total, 1679 (65%) of the objects within the database could be attributed to an archaeological context (see Appendix 2.4). Archaeological context is defined in a relatively broad sense here: a stray find from a hillfort will have been assigned to a ‘hillfort’ context, for example. Figure 2.7a shows the different places in which objects have been found. Perhaps the most important attribute to note is the fact that over half of them (52%) were found either in dry land hoards or burials.

The fact that such a large proportion of the corpus has been recovered from what can probably be assumed to be highly selective or contrived contexts has important implications for the representativeness of the archaeological assemblage we have today.

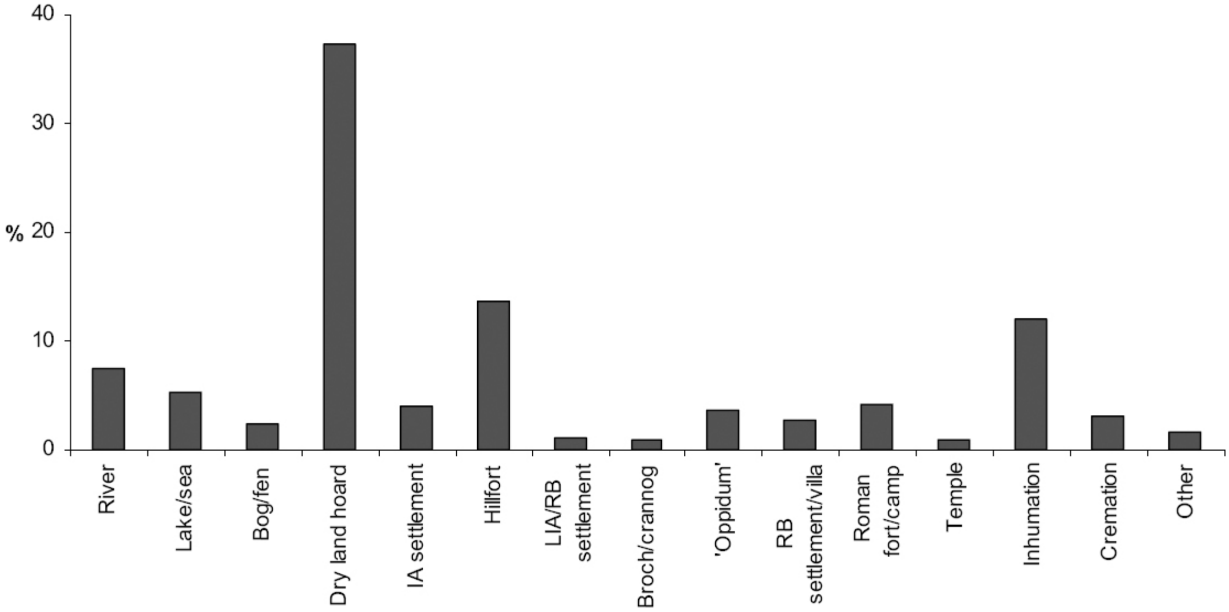


Figure 2.7a. Percentage of artefacts within each context (total no. 1679)

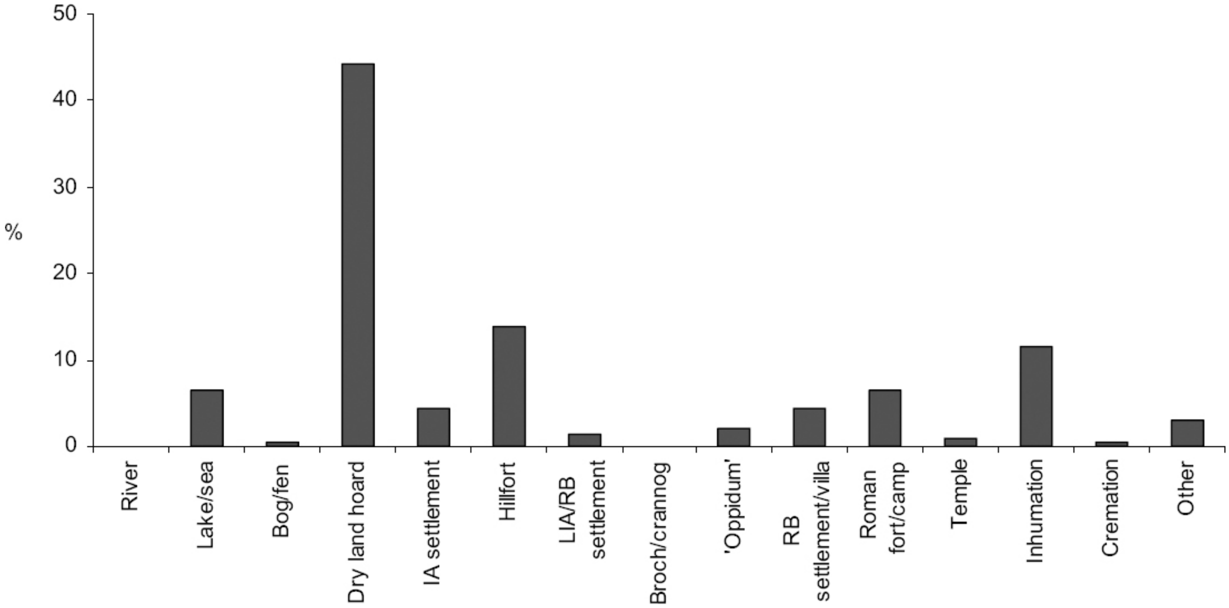


Figure 2.7b. Percentage of horse gear (general) within each context (total no. 201)

When individual object types are plotted by context, further strong patterns emerge. Some items – such as horse gear – have a context profile which is similar in character to the database as a whole (Figure 2.7b). Other objects, however, are found almost exclusively in very specific contexts. The vast majority of arm rings, for example, have been found in inhumations (Figure 2.7c). By contrast, massive armlets – which, being worn on a similar part of the body, might be expected to turn up in similar locations – are never found in burials, themselves being recovered almost exclusively from dry land hoards (Figure 2.7d). It is also possible to view this information from the other direction, looking at the different types of object found in particular contexts: for example, almost half of the mirrors, and three-quarters of the fire-dogs (of which, admittedly, there are only four) were found with cremations (Figure 2.7e). This variability between object types presents us with a complex series of patterns. The marked discrepancy between the depositional contexts of arm rings and massive armlets suggests, first of all, that the ways in which we categorise material culture in the present do not necessarily interesect with those of the past in a straightforward way; and, secondly, that in the past in some cases there must have been very clear understandings (whether implicit or explicit) as to where it was appropriate for objects to end up. Similarly, the fact that items such as mirrors and fire dogs have been found in a very restricted range of contexts reminds us that our distribution plots are not necessarily reflective of the past *uses* of those objects (assuming they *were* used prior to deposition), and can be heavily skewed by what might be seen as secondary factors (such as the practice of cremating the dead).

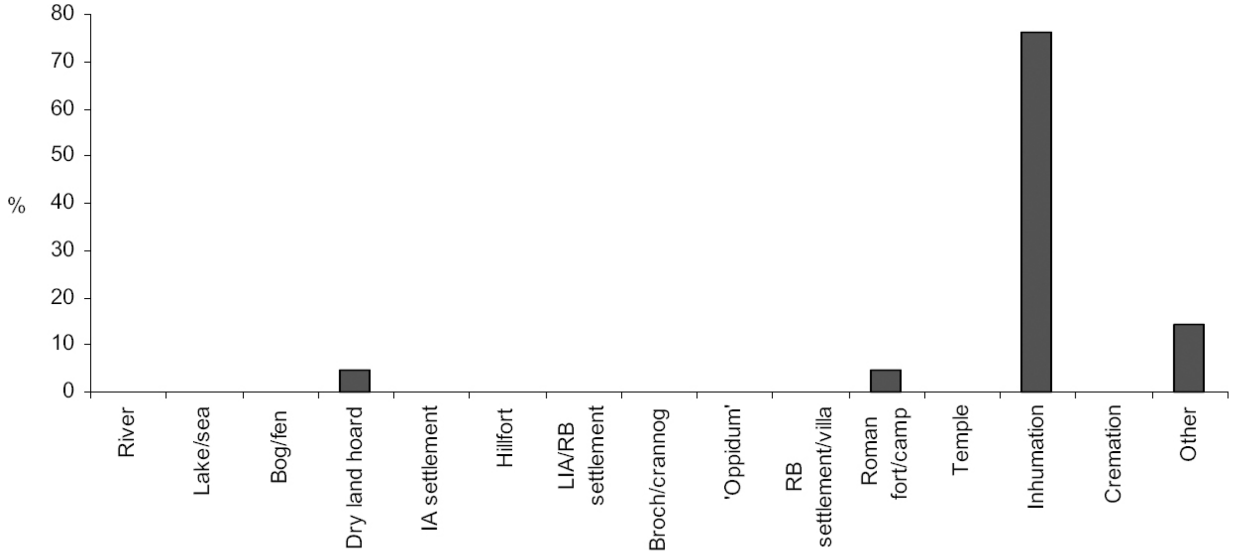


Figure 2.7c. Percentage of arm rings within each context (total no. 21)

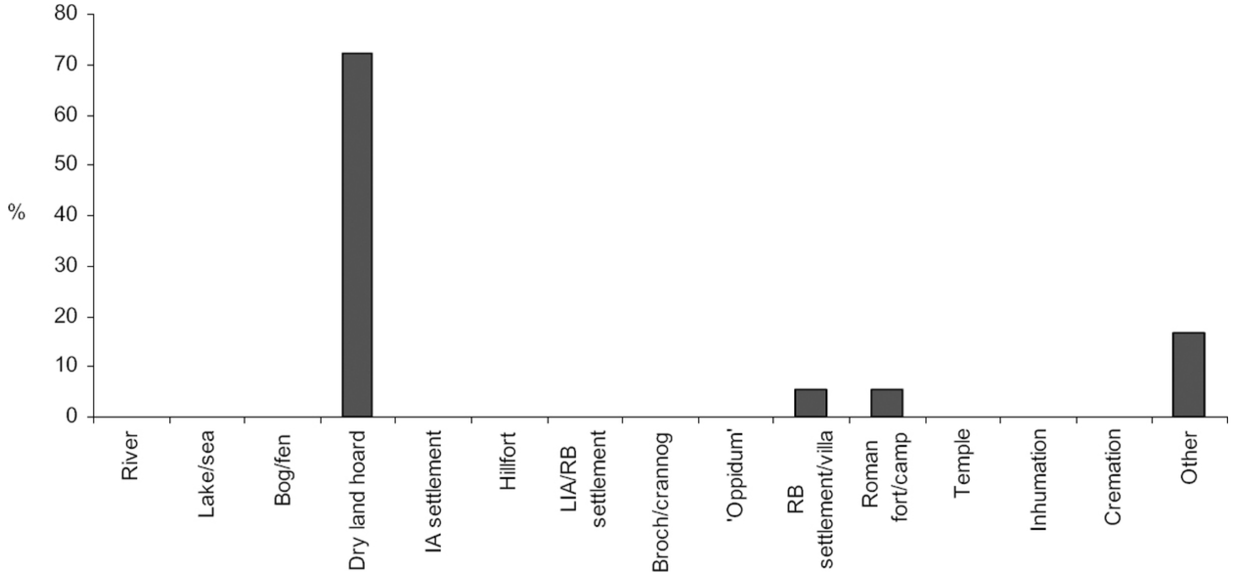


Figure 2.7d. Percentage of massive armlets within each context (total no. 18)

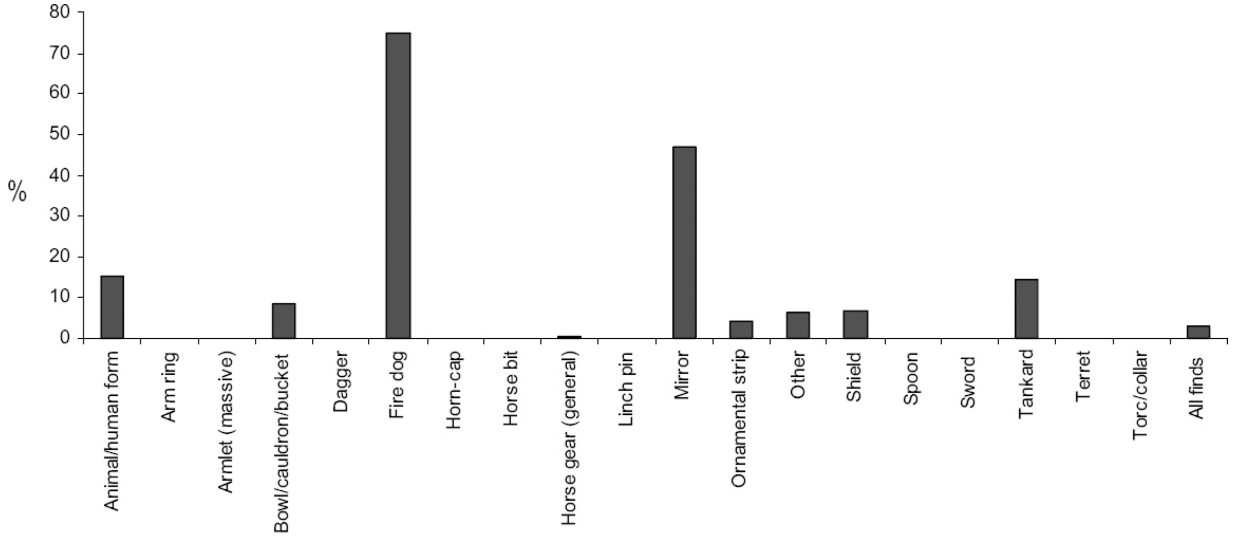


Figure 2.7e. Percentage of each artefact type found in cremation contexts (total no. 53)

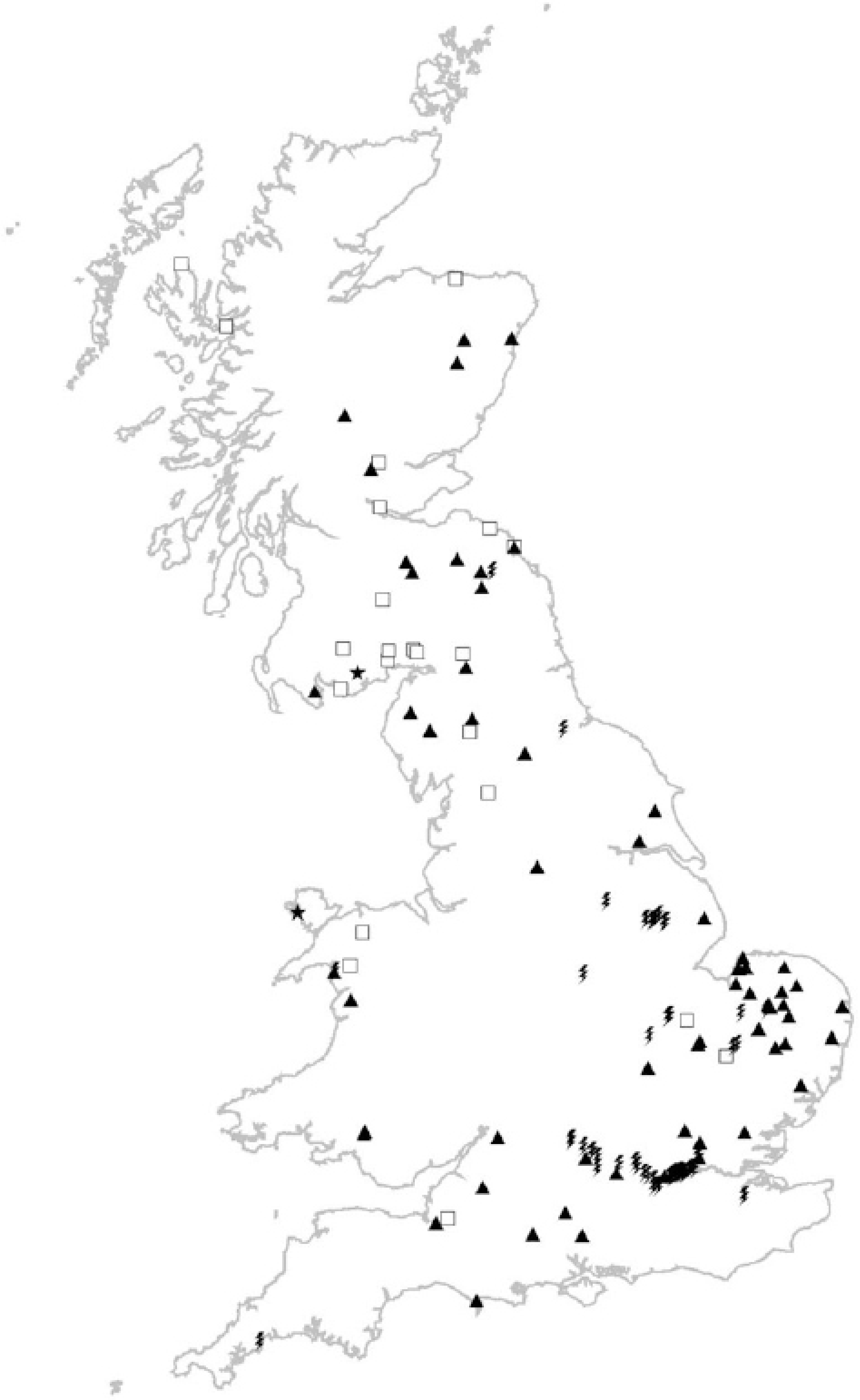


Figure 2.8a. Distribution of depositional contexts: dry land hoards (triangles), rivers (zigzags), lakes (stars) and bog/fen (squares)

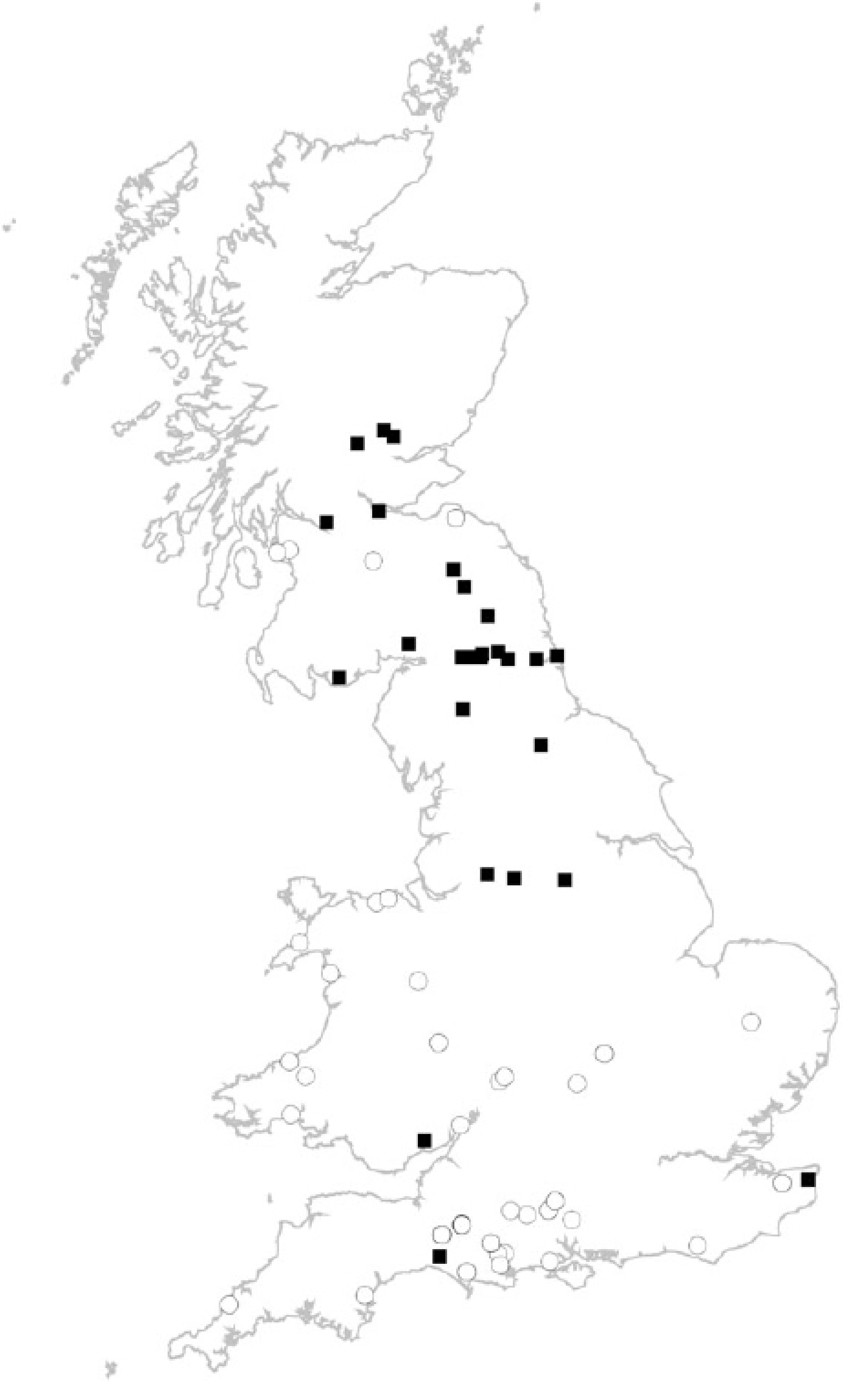
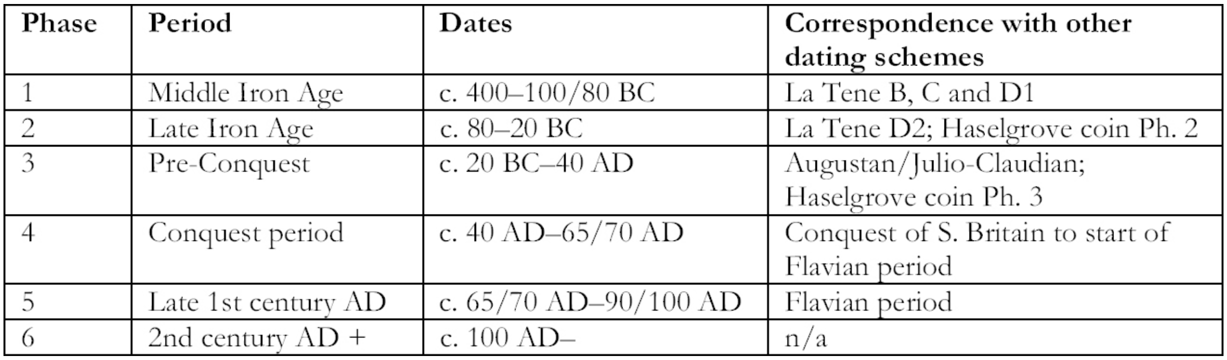


Figure 2.8b. Distribution of objects within hillforts (white circles) and Roman forts (black squares)

It is also possible to discern an element of regionality to the distribution of depositional contexts across Britain (Figure 2.8a). Whilst dry land hoards are distributed across the study area and bog/fen finds are found in most places where those contexts exist, river finds are much more closely restricted (essentially to the Thames, the Witham and around the Fenland region). This suggests that certain practices, associated with certain depositional contexts, were regionally restricted (as well, perhaps, as being temporally restricted). While skewing the recovery of certain artefact types, this variability should not be viewed as an entirely negative problem. It can also tell us about past practice, and the range of activities in which these objects became caught up. For example, although the distribution of daggers and shields (as deposited) may not be representative of the areas in which they were used, it does tell us that the practice of depositing them in rivers was for some reason particularly prevalent there. Along similar lines, while both hillforts and Roman military forts are found right across Britain, objects from the former are limited predominantly to the south, and from the latter almost exclusively to the north (Figure 2.8b). While this pattern is no doubt partly a consequence of the spread of objects northwards over time (see below), it also informs us about the contexts (and therefore social dynamics) in which this material was used and deposited. For example, the presence of Celtic Art-related material in many 'Roman' forts in the north suggests that these objects may not have been as straightforwardly associated with 'native' identity as the term 'Celtic' suggests (see also Hunter this volume).



Phase	Period	Dates	Correspondence with other dating schemes
1	Middle Iron Age	c. 400–100/80 BC	La Tene B, C and D1
2	Late Iron Age	c. 80–20 BC	La Tene D2; Haselgrove coin Ph. 2
3	Pre-Conquest	c. 20 BC–40 AD	Augustan/Julio-Claudian; Haselgrove coin Ph. 3
4	Conquest period	c. 40 AD–65/70 AD	Conquest of S. Britain to start of Flavian period
5	Late 1st century AD	c. 65/70 AD–90/100 AD	Flavian period
6	2nd century AD +	c. 100 AD–	n/a

Table 2.1. Chronological sub-divisions used (note that calendar dates and correspondences with other schemes are approximate; see Haselgrove 1993 for details of coin phasing)

The temporal distribution of objects

In order to facilitate the comparison of artefact distributions and quantities through time, it was necessary to subdivide the late Iron Age/early Roman period into a series of smaller tranches of time. In order to characterise change over that period best, it was decided that these should not simply be chronological blocks of equal length, but phases split into historically relevant slices which fit approximately with other dating schemes (Table 2.1):

Figure 2.9a shows the number of dated objects per phase. As discussed above, whilst some artefacts' contexts were datable to within a few years, others could be assigned only to a period of centuries. With the latter, it was therefore necessary to assign some objects to two (and occasionally even three or four) separate phases. In this case, objects were simply apportioned equally; for instance, if ten objects were attributable to Phases 2 or 3, five were counted towards Phase 2 and five towards Phase 3. In many ways the most striking attribute of the graph is the size of the 65–100 AD column: the phase which produced the most 'Celtic' Art (and related objects) is actually firmly within post-Conquest, 'Romano-British' Britain. It is important to point out that these relative quantities are skewed to some extent because the periods being compared are of uneven lengths. In order to counteract this bias, the overall number of objects within each phase was divided by the number of years the phase lasted, to give a standardised figure of 'number of objects deposited per year' (Figure 2.9b). In fact, this calibrated version makes the pattern significantly more pronounced, with the value for 65–100 AD far outnumbering any of the other phases, and with the 40–65 AD period coming second.

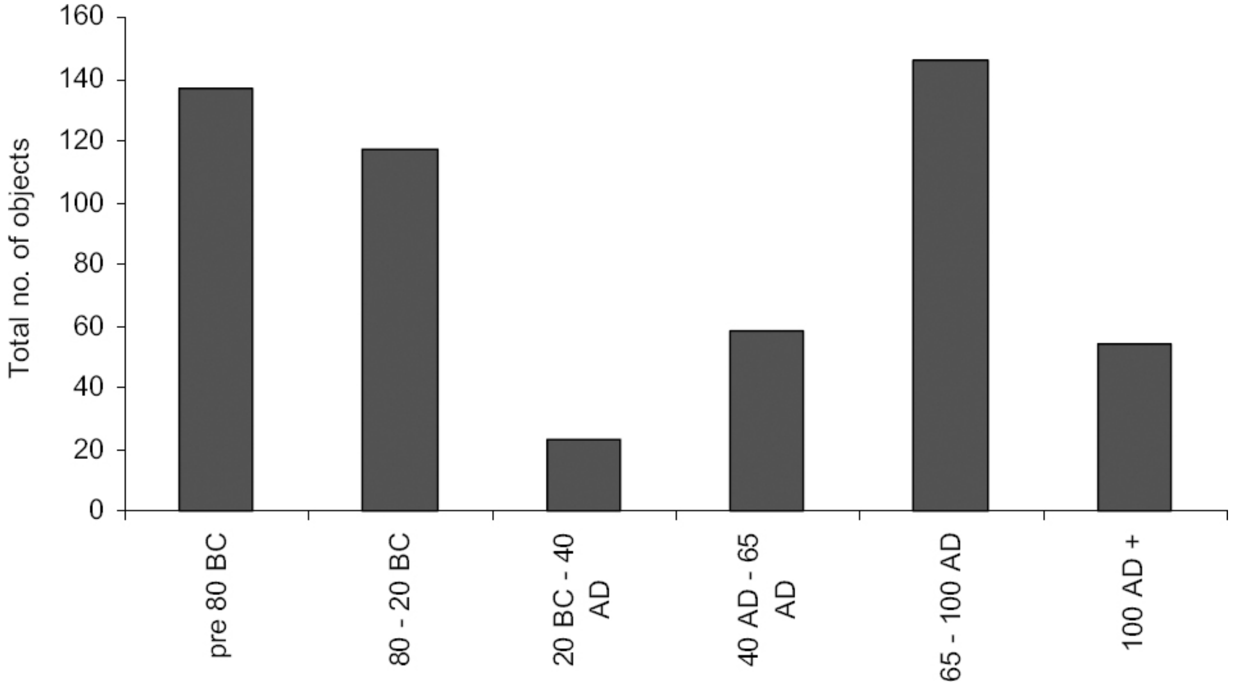


Figure 2.9a. Numbers of objects deposited per phase overall (total no. 535)

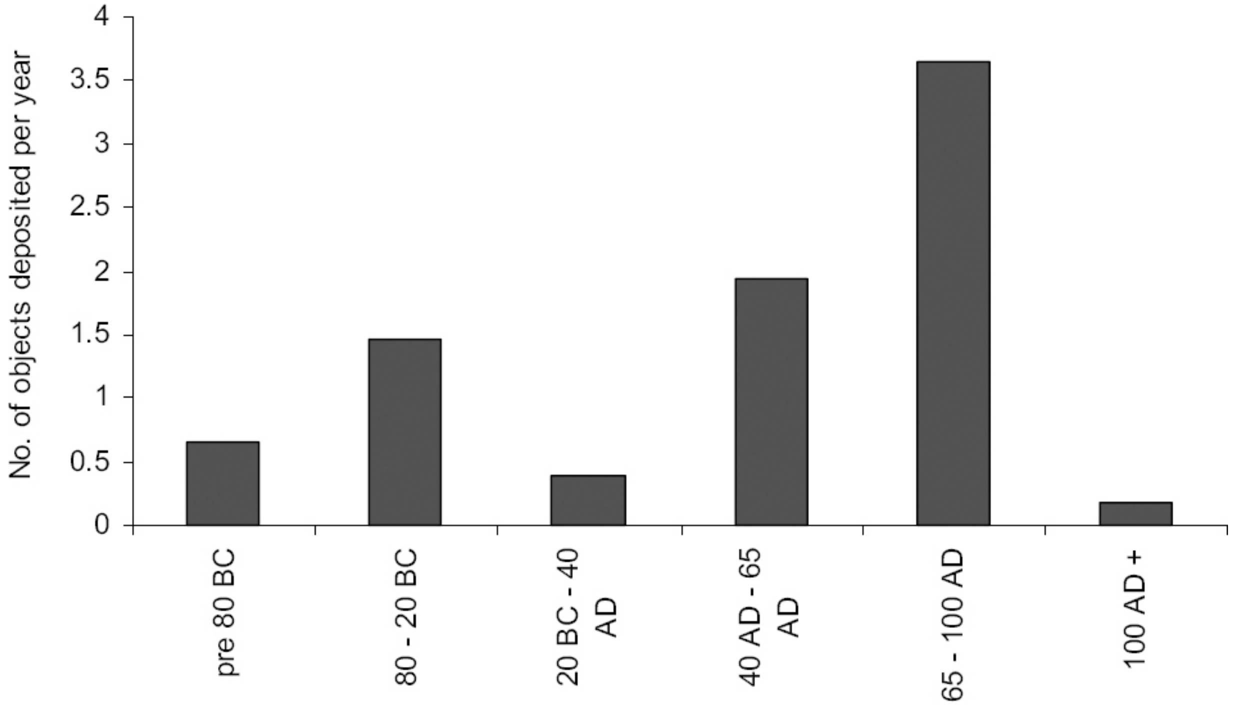


Figure 2.9b. Numbers of objects deposited per phase per year (total no. 535)

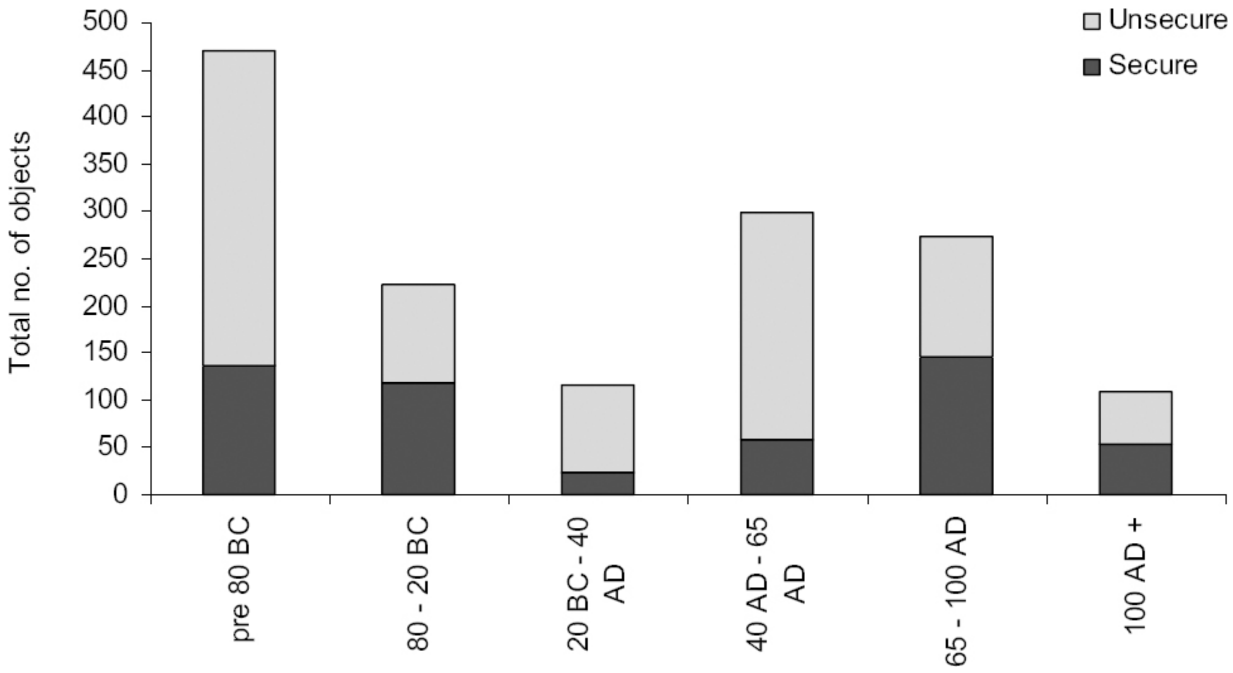


Figure 2.9c. Numbers of objects deposited overall, including 'unsecurely' dated finds (total no. 1491)

Clearly, as with the distributional data discussed above, there are certain factors affecting the analysis which must be taken into account. For example, we are of course not actually discussing the *use* of artefacts here, but their *deposition*. Similarly, with occasional exceptions (where objects had already been radiocarbon dated), we are only discussing artefacts *which ended up within datable contexts* (i.e. containing pottery, coins, brooches, etc.). Objects which came to be deposited in other circumstances are not in this case represented. Conversely, cases where hoards contained datable objects (more numerous after the Conquest) will have resulted in many objects *being* dated. It might also be argued that any contextual dating survey focusing on this period will always be inherently biased towards the later phases as Romano-British contexts are simply *more datable* (pottery is often very diagnostic, well-dated coins exist, etc.) than their Iron Age counterparts.

In order to check that these patterns were not purely a consequence of the increased potential for dating later artefacts, a much broader dating survey was undertaken. In this survey, artefacts were attributed to different phases much more speculatively. Objects were phased in a number of different ways, and with varying degrees of certainty. There is little space (or need) to go into the process in substantial detail here, but it is perhaps helpful to provide some idea of the methodology. For example, all of the swords within Stead's corpus were dated according to the typological chronology set out in his recent book (2006; approximate dates for each sword type are provided at the end of each chapter). In addition, all of those objects containing multi-coloured 'enamel' (blue, yellow, white, etc.) were dated as 1st century AD or later. Similarly, in cases where all known contextually dated examples of a particular object type have been attributable to a particular phase or phases, that date was attributed to all of the other examples as well. In this case all ribbed terrets, for example, were attributed to Phases 1–2, and all flat-ring terrets to Phases 3–5. In total, 1692 of the objects within the database (66%) were phased in this way.

The most significant change in relation to previous patterns was an increase in the number of objects assigned to Phase 1 (see Figure 2.9c). This difference ensured that Phase 1 actually produced the largest number of finds overall. However, once the different lengths of each phase were taken into account, as before the mid and late 1st century AD phases (4 and 5) came out on top, producing far more objects per year (although in this case, with 'speculatively' dated finds included as well, Phase 4 outnumbered Phase 5). Even when the biases discussed above are taken into consideration, the prevalence of objects within the Roman period in Britain remains striking. Before moving on to consider the implications that this patterning has in terms of our broader understandings of this material, it is worth discussing the geographical distributions of objects through time as well.

Figure 2.10 shows the locations of all *contextually* dated objects within each of the six phases. A clear, essentially three-stage trend is visible: up to the latter part of the 1st century BC, objects are relatively well-dispersed across Britain, stretching from western Cornwall to southern Scotland. However, immediately prior to and during the Conquest period (20 BC to 65 AD), the distribution of objects is without exception limited to the south (primarily to the south and east of England). This patterning is no doubt influenced significantly by the fact that most finds actually datable to these two phases (wheel-thrown pottery in particular) are themselves found almost exclusively in the south. Nevertheless, despite this, the almost total absence of finds from the north at this time is striking. Throughout the latter part of the 1st century AD and beyond, however, the picture changes dramatically. The distribution becomes biased towards the north, especially after 100 AD when the majority of objects are found in northern England and southern Scotland. Similar phase plots were produced depicting all of the 'speculatively' phased artefacts as well. While obviously having more dots on each map, the regional distributions which resulted were in fact very similar to those in Figure 2.10. The only notable differences were seen in the plot for Phase 1, which showed significantly greater numbers of finds across East Anglia (predominantly horse gear) and in southern Scotland (predominantly sword fragments and cauldrons).

In light of these shifts in the geographical locations of material, it is also interesting to assess their changing contextual locations over time. Objects prior to the 1st century BC have been recovered predominantly from hillforts/settlements in central southern England and the East Yorkshire square barrow cemeteries, with occasional outlying finds (such as the torcs at Snettisham and Netherurd and the radiocarbon dated spoons from the burial at Burnmouth). For the period 80–20 BC, due to the overlap of many finds from Phase 1, the distribution in central southern England is much the same. Most East Yorkshire burial findspots disappear, but numerous burial finds in south-east England appear, reflecting the uptake of the 'Aylesford-Swarling' burial rite and a number of 'warrior' burials. During the pre-Conquest and Conquest phases (20 BC–65 AD), objects are found in southern and south-eastern England, in relatively small numbers but in a wide variety of contexts (settlements, villas, hillforts, 'oppida', temples, hoards, burials). During the latter part of the 1st century AD, the picture changes significantly. As discussed, there is a dramatic shift northwards in the distribution of artefacts. In both north and south, objects are found in a wide range of contexts (brochs, Roman forts, 'oppida' and various types of hoards in the north; Roman settlements, villas, hillforts, 'oppida' and dry land hoards in the south). From the 2nd century AD onwards, there are rather fewer objects in the south but more from the north (many of these being found in Roman forts and hoards).

There are clearly complex issues and processes at work which need to be considered here, which cannot easily be understood through distribution plots alone. Nevertheless, broad patterns through time such as these do raise important questions as to how we should understand Celtic Art and related objects. The significant shifts in the depositional contexts and regions with which this material was associated may suggest that the meanings and uses of what has often been seen as an essentialy coherent, if gradually-developing, art 'style' may well have changed dramatically over the course of these centuries. The broad three-stage development of the distribution map could suggest that, initially, these objects were taken up and used in a disparate and varied set of circumstances. Their prevalence in the south-east during the late 1st century BC and early 1st century AD, particularly in burials and hoards, may suggest that, at some level, those objects were implicated in the complex and dramatic processes of political and economic transformation which occurred in this region at that time. Equally, it is interesting that much of the datable material actually appears to have been deposited during the late first century AD and beyond, well after the Roman invasion. As discussed above, we are of course talking about the *deposition* rather than the *use* of these objects; however, there is ample evidence (such as that discussed by Davis and Gwilt and Hunter in this volume) to suggest that these objects were certainly *made* during the mid-late 1st century AD. We can therefore be confident that we are not just talking about objects manufactured during the Iron Age being deposited much later on. The fact that these 'Celtic' objects appear to have flourished at this time, often being deposited in staunchly 'Roman' contexts such as villas and military forts, suggests that the process of 'Romanisation' was indeed far from being a unidirectional and straightforward affair (an issue discussed in detail by Hunter, this volume).

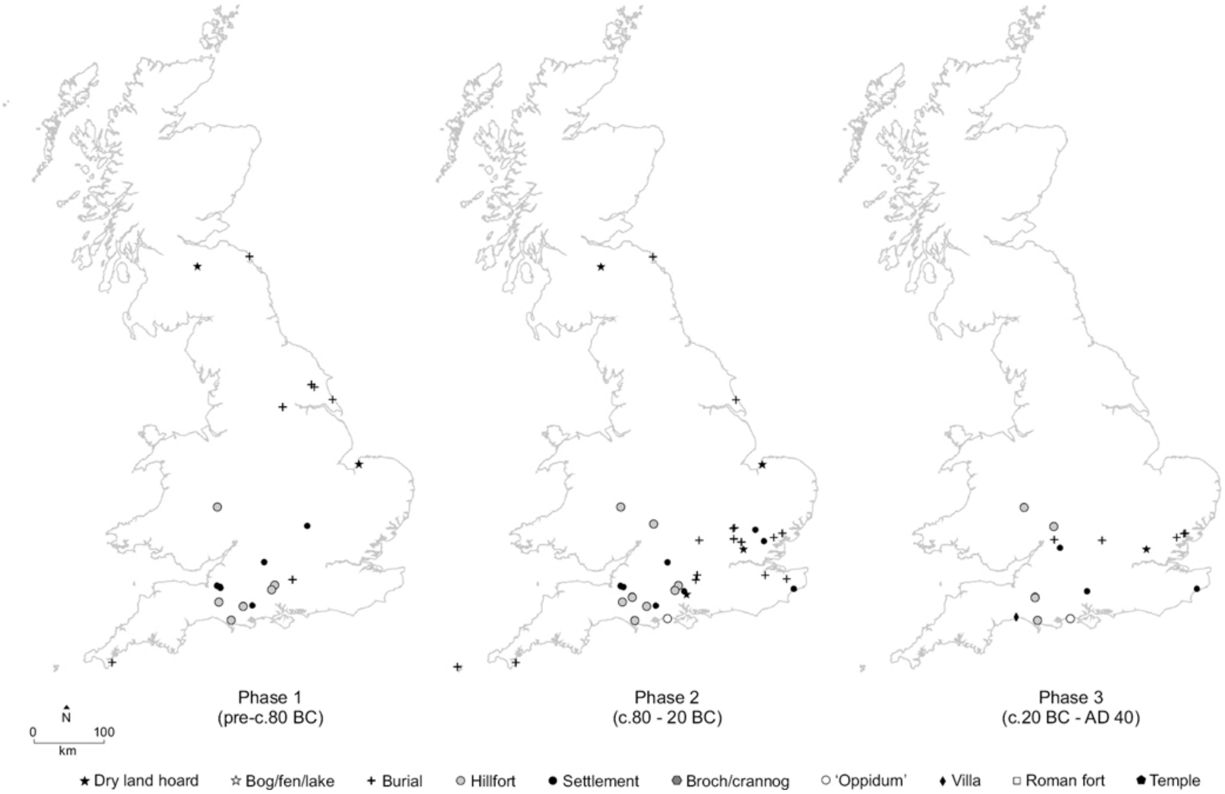

Phase 1
(pre-c.80 BC)
Phase 2
(c.80 - 20 BC)
Phase 3
(c.20 BC - AD 40)
N
0
100
km
★ Dry land hoard
☆ Bog/fen/lake
+ Burial
○ Hillfort
● Settlement
● Broch/crannog
○ 'Oppidum'
♦ Villa
□ Roman fort
⬟ Temple

Figure 2.10a. Distributions of contextually dated artefacts within Phases 1–3. 'Speculatively' dated items are not included. Note that when artefacts were assigned to two phases they are shown on both maps; artefacts assigned to more than two phases are not depicted

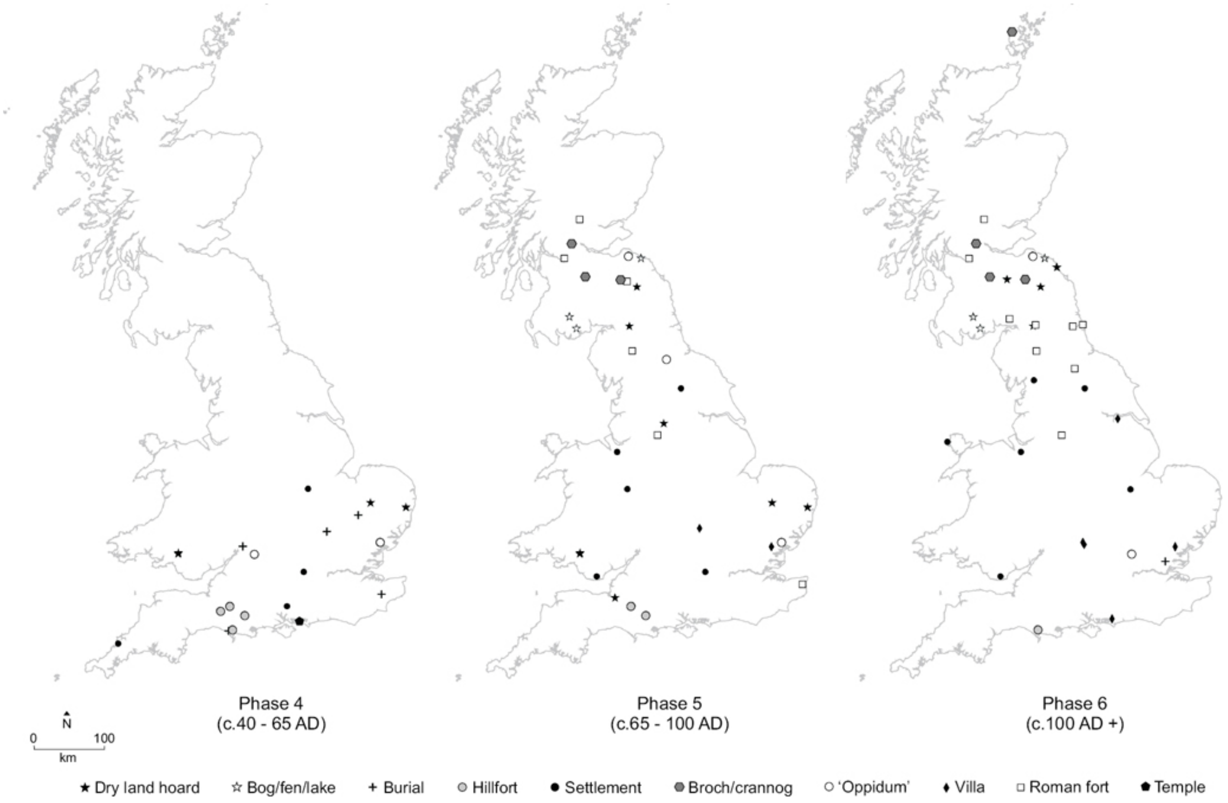

N
0
100
km
Phase 4
(c.40 - 65 AD)
Phase 5
(c.65 - 100 AD)
Phase 6
(c.100 AD +)
★ Dry land hoard
☆ Bog/fen/lake
+ Burial
◎ Hillfort
● Settlement
● Broch/crannog
○ 'Oppidum'
♦ Villa
□ Roman fort
⬟ Temple

Figure 2.10b. Distributions of contextually dated artefacts nithin Phases 4–6. 'Speculatively ' dated items are not included. Note that when artefacts were assigned to two phases they are shown on both maps; artefacts assigned to more than two phases are not depicted

Concluding comment

Given the quantities of material which might be categorised as Celtic Art-related in Britain, and therefore the quantities of material which came to be incorporated into the database, it is impossible to provide a comprehensive survey of the patterns which might result from its analysis. Within this paper, however, it has nevertheless been feasible to discuss all of the key patterns identified, and to give an impression of the potential that this kind of comprehensive database has for analytical investigation. The study of geographical and temporal distributions, contextual patterning, etc. at this very broad scale brings with it a particular character of understanding, that arguably is more suited to the raising than to the answering of questions. Overall, however, it is hoped that as a result of this detailed interrogation of the 'Technologies of Enchantment' database, as well as a series of interesting questions, a firm empirical foundation for future work has been constructed.

Acknowledgements

There are many people without whose assistance and/or hard work the database discussed in this paper could never have been built. First and formemost, it is important to acknowledge those whose corpora provided it with such a firm foundation: Martyn Jope, Morna MacGregor, Natalie Palk, Mansel Spratling and Ian Stead. Many other people have contributed aspects of their work or knowledge as well: in particular, Adam Gwilt, J. D. Hill, Fraser Hunter, Natasha Hutcheson, Jody Joy, Ian Leins and Phil Macdonald. I would also like to thank Dan Pett and Sally Worrell for making the Portable Antiquities Scheme data so readily available to me; and Mike Athanson, John Pouncett and Fraser Sturt for much-needed GIS assistance. I am also very grateful to Anwen Cooper, Chris Gosden, J. D. Hill, Mansel Spratling and all of the participants in the 'Rethinking Celtic Art' workshop, who kindly offered their thoughts on previous versions of this paper.

Appendix 2.1. Sources used in compiling the database

Full references can be found in the bibliography. Note that certain other key papers (e.g. Taylor and Brailsford 1985) are not listed because their findings had already been fully incoporated by Jope 2000.

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Hill, J. D. pers. comm. (personal files held at British Museum)
Hunter, F. pers. comm. (personal files updating MacGregor at National Museum of Scotland)
Hutcheson, N. 2004. *Later Iron Age Norfolk: metalwork, landscape and society*.
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Joy, J. 2008. *Reflections on the Iron Age: biographies of mirrors*.
MacDonald, P. 2007. *Llyn Cerrig Bach: a study of the copper alloy artefacts from the Insular La Tène assemblage*. Cardiff: Universty of Wales.
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Stead, I. 1991a. The Snettisham treasure: excavations in 1990. *Antiquity* 65, 447–464.

Stead, 1991b. *Iron Age cemeteries in East Yorkshire*.
Stead, I. 2006. *British Iron Age swords and scabbards*.

Appendix 2.2. Database construction methods

The database was constructed in such a way that each object occupies one ‘row’, whilst the varied information about that object is contained in multiple ‘columns’. The information relating to each object divides approximately into four broad fields:

- object description
- location
- sources/references
- date

The *object description* section provides information about what kind of object each entry refers to (e.g. tubular torc, parallel-winged terret, scabbard chape-end, etc.); the material(s) it is made from (copper alloy, gold, enamel, etc.); and the condition it is in (complete, semi-complete, fragment, etc.). It also includes a lengthier written description of the object, detailing any outstanding or defining features, the type of decoration used, etc. In total, 186 different object types are listed (this represents the highest figure possible, with cow-shaped bucket mounts, for example, listed separately to bird-shaped ones, etc.). Thus in order to make comparisons of patterning between different objects possible, each item was also assigned to one of nineteen broader object categories (listed in Appendix 2.3); the examples above, for instance, thus became ‘torc/collar’, ‘terret’ and ‘sword/scabbard’.

The *location* section provides information about both the contextual and the geographical location in which each object was found. Contextual information, if sufficiently detailed in the original source, is recorded at several different levels; a single object’s location might, for example, read ‘hillfort’, ‘hut circle’ or ‘within stone wall’ in different columns. As with object types, in order to facilitate broader comparisons, each object was assigned to one of eighteen broader context/site types (listed in Appendix 2.4). The geographical information provided in most original sources generally detailed the nearest farm, village or town to the findspot, along with the county. For the purposes of our project, it was necessary to transfer this locational information into a co-ordinate system which could be used in GIS. This was achieved by carrying out a simple internet search to obtain Ordnance Survey co-ordinates for each of the given place names (where these had not already been given).

The *sources/references* section provides information about where each object has previously been published, and where it is currently held. In the case of the former, the information included in the database is not comprehensive, but details the relevant catalogue numbers in Jope (2000), MacGregor (1976) and Spratling's (1972) corpora, and elsewhere if necessary, where further references to the original find/site reports can be found. In cases where finds had not been published in the traditional fashion (for example, many of those found as a result of the PAS), this is clearly stated. Details about the current location of each object (in most cases a museum) are provided, as is the museum accession number (where stated in the original source).

Appendix 2.3. List of broad object categories

Animal/human form
Armlet (massive)
Arm ring
Bowl/bucket/cauldron
Dagger
Fire dog
Horn-cap
Horse bit
Horse gear (general)
Linch pin
Mirror
Ornamental strip
Shield
Spoon
Sword
Tankard
Terret
Torc/collar
Other

Appendix 2.4. List of broad site/context types

Bog/fen
Broch/crannog
Burial – inhumation
Burial – cremation
Hillfort
Iron Age settlement
Lake/sea
Landscape hoard
Late Iron Age/Romano-British settlement
'Oppidum'
Romano-British settlement/villa
River
Roman fort/camp
Temple
Villa
Other
Stray
Unknown

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Stead, I. 1991b. *Iron Age cemeteries in East Yorkshire: excavations at Burton Fleming, Rudston, Garton-on-the-Wolds and Kirkburn*. London, English Heritage.

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3

A Celtic mystery: some thoughts on the genesis of insular Celtic art

J. V. S. Megaw and M. Ruth Megaw

Introduction: is it art?

Few readers of this volume will be of a sufficient antiquity to remember the highly popular BBC Radio programme, *The Brains Trust*, predecessor of today's *Any Questions*. None therefore may recall the regular panellist, 'Professor' C. E. M. Joad (1891–1953), a philosopher but never actually a professor who made the front pages of every newspaper in the land when he was caught evading payment of his rail ticket. More importantly, Joad used to preface his answer to any question which came his way with 'It all depends what you mean by …' A good question indeed so let us baldly state that for the purpose of this paper we intend to use the terms 'Celt', 'Celtic' and 'La Tène' as interchangeable – but still useful – conventional labels.

There is also the matter of what we have previously referred to as 'that tricky little three-letter word' – 'art', a definitional problem that strangely has in recent years not occupied half so much discussion as 'Celt' and 'Celtic' (Megaw and Megaw 1998). It may be apposite to remember here what Barry Cunliffe has written about the St-Pol-de-Léon, Finistère pot (Figure 3.1a) – an object which incidentally has some intriguing points of comparison with insular material. He comments: 'It is totally beyond the abilities of the art historian or archaeologist to say what the owner of the … pot was attempting to communicate. All that we can be tolerably sure about is that communication was intended. If then we reject "art for art's sake" as a starting point (and with it the even less acceptable "art for art historian's sake"), it is pertinent to ask how readily understood was the symbolism at the time?' (Cunliffe 1997, 111–2).

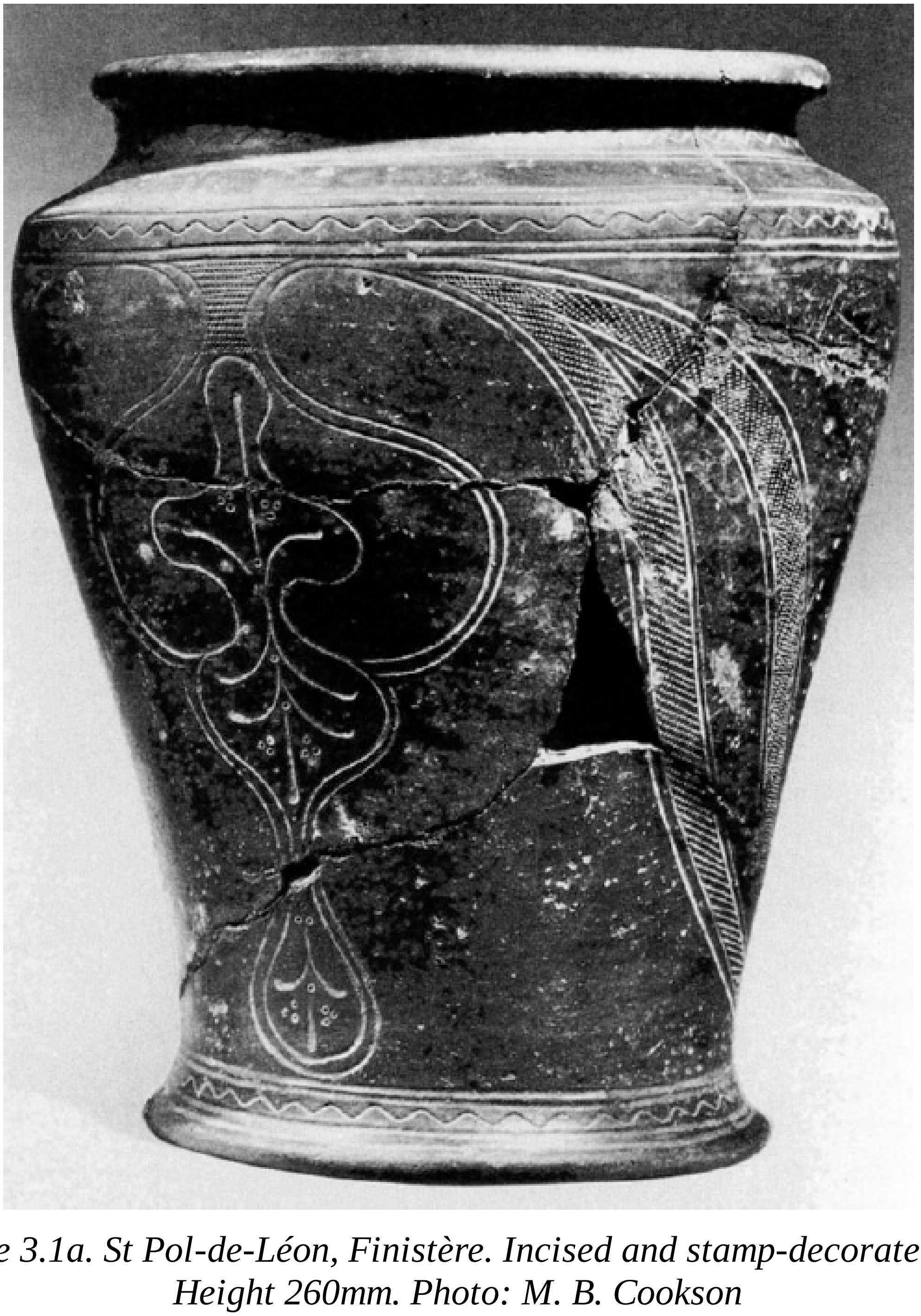

Figure 3.1a. St Pol-de-Léon, Finistère. Incised and stamp-decorated pot. Height 260mm. Photo: M. B. Cookson

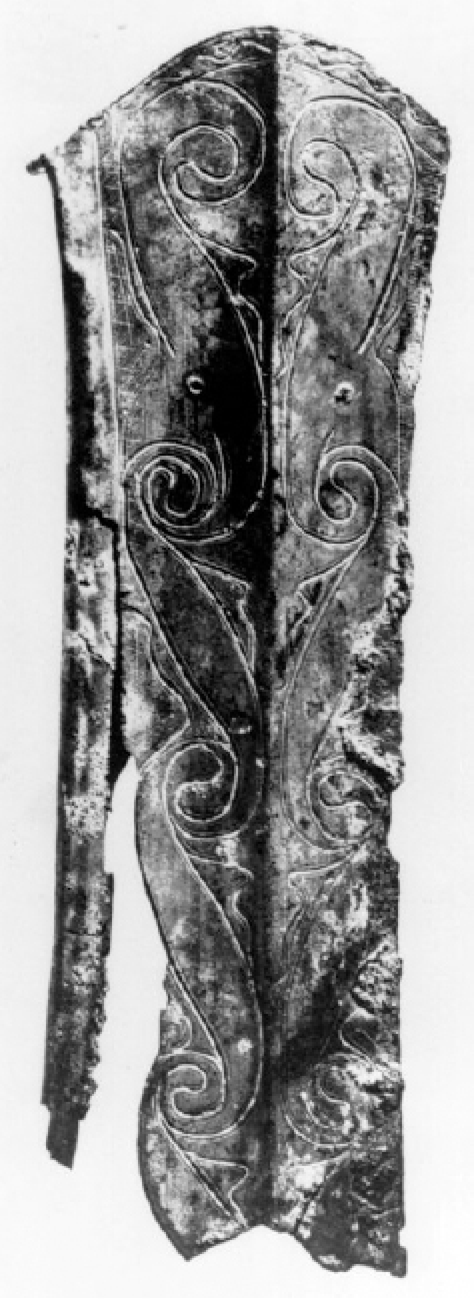

Figure 3.1b. Wisbech, Cambridgeshire. Fragmentary bronze scabbard. Width 40mm. © Copyright the Trustees of The British Museum

Colin Renfrew, in the published version of his 2001 Rhind Lectures devoted to an examination of the interface between contemporary art and archaeology, has a whole chapter which he entitles ‘What is art? The tyranny of the Renaissance’. He comments that neither the use of the term ‘art’ nor of beauty, is very helpful for a general discussion about figuration or iconography, particularly when one is dealing with objects, monuments or works falling outside the European Classical and Renaissance traditions (Renfrew 2003, esp. 201). Following Renfrew – and with a contribution from Renfrew – a whole issue of *Archaeology from Cambridge* has been devoted to demonstrating 'how the application of ideas from contemporary art to archaeological artefacts can enhance our understanding of prehistoric culture' (Barrowclough 2004, esp.11); unfortunately, we do not perceive much light being generated on the dark corners of meaning in early Celtic art or an answer to the question as to whether we should consider such a category in Iron Age material culture. It is perhaps not surprising that the only paper in Barrowclough's collection that seems to offer some positive answers is that by an Indigenous Australian anthropologist and a non-Indigenous archaeologist who study the archaeology of a region of Arnhem Land 'where artistic conventions and associated social practises can be connected through unbroken time from the ethnographic present into a deeper past' (Langton and David 2004, 58). Since the whole debate about what is the nature of art in prehistory is clearly central to the aims of the project of which this volume is the first concrete result, we must leave it to others to expand further on this definitional point. Let us simply repeat what we first wrote almost two decades ago: 'A minimal working definition of Celtic art is that it encompasses elements of decoration beyond those necessary for functional utility'. Ignoring the possible tautology, we went on: 'though these elements represent a form of symbolic visual communication which is only partially accessible to us' (Megaw and Megaw 2001a, 19). Our colleague the philosopher, critic (and former practising artist) Donald Brook would go further and some years ago persuasively argued for the substitution of 'representation' for the institutional and aesthetically loaded 'art', believing that art only becomes 'art' when placed within or recognised by the art institution (Brook 1992, esp.185–7). More recently he has suggested that we should put this funny stuff called art outside the domain of a kind of intellectual skill and, rather than search for what is behind the exercise of a currently available and public intellectual ability, that we should instead ask why do people seemingly make useless decorations. To which the answer should be that illumination occasionally supervenes (Brook, pers. comm.).

To return to the ambitious task we have set ourselves, we have titled our paper A *Celtic mystery*. There is here an intentional echo of Paul Jacobsthal's famous statement concerning the enigma of continental developments: 'Celtic art has no genesis' – by which of course he did not mean that it appeared from nowhere, that it owed nothing to what had gone before or also to what was being created contemporaneously with it (Jacobsthal 1944, 158; for a recent appreciation of Jacobsthal's contribution to early Celtic art studies by his natural successor see Frey 2007). No, what is meant here is simply that the complex sources which seemed to have contributed to the birth of Celtic art did so without any discernibly long gestation period.

And here we may quote from an early and little-known essay by Mortimer Wheeler in which he was predominantly concerned with the later phases of insular art. However, he opens thus;

> 'An artistic impulse, like life itself, defies ultimate analysis. We can no more readily explain the genesis of a thing like Celtic art than we can readily explain the genesis of a bumble-bee. All that we can hope to establish is a particular environment, a concatenation of specially favourable circumstances, which may reasonably be thought to have contributed to the genesis or regeneration of Celtic art in the time and place where that event in fact occurred. Nor need we envisage a long period of gestation.' (Wheeler 1932, 294)

In the beginning

Stuart Piggott, whom we have to blame for first encouraging our interest in early Celtic art some fifty years ago, was fond of saying that the best way to understand a subject was through studying its history. With an acknowledgement to John Kemble's posthumously published *Horae Ferales* (Kemble et al. 1863), we may begin with a brief survey of changing theories as to the genesis of Celtic art (see further the summary in Megaw and Megaw 2001a, 12–6 and, more expansively, Echt 1999, 223–55; for a recent interesting, if not complete, overview which, for our taste, exhibits rather too much reference to Alfred Gell see Macdonald 2007).

In 1895 Arthur Evans gave the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland's Rhind Lectures, entitling his six lectures *The origins of Celtic art*, a series which, had it ever been published in more than summary form *(The Scotsman* 12 December 1895, 7; 14 December 1895, 7), would now stand fair comparison with many more recent overviews. In his lectures, the handwritten texts for which have survived in the Evans Archives in the Ashmolean Museum, Evans detected in the development of the art of the second, La Tène, phase of the Iron Age the influence of Etruria. He also placed particular emphasis on the art of the Venetic region and of archaic as well as classical Greek as well as other eastern elements which he regarded as having been transmitted through Scythian art. Almost a century later, Otto-Herman Frey's Rhind Lectures, given in 1977–78 under the title of 'Pre-Roman Celtic art', and also, alas, unpublished, with its emphasis on the significance of northern Italy, contained more than an echo of his predecessor. Evans not only looked to Champagne for a comparison – though not necessarily an origin – for the so-called Arras burials while he maintained the Venetic link as an ultimate source for the later pedestalled urns of south-eastern England where some five years earlier he had excavated with his father the Aylesford cemetery.

We may back-track to 1952 and an essay by J.M. de Navarro entitled 'The Celts in Britain and their art' in which he advanced for a general audience his four-fold periodisation of Insular Iron Age art, a scheme that frankly we have never cared for but was adopted and extended by Ian Stead who took up the system some thirty years after de Navarro (Stead 1985a, 15–23; 1985b, 27–36). Important here was De Navarro's evoking of the continental sources of his Insular Style IV with its predominant use of engraved line decoration which he suggested was 'probably due to the bringing in of foreign artists … from Hungary and Switzerland'; he adds: 'Its creators were obviously working for rich patrons, either princely or priestly.' (de Navarro 1952, 75). And here of course de Navarro was thinking of the various continental sub-groups of sword-makers and scabbard-engravers to which he was to devote so much of his later life (de Navarro 1972).

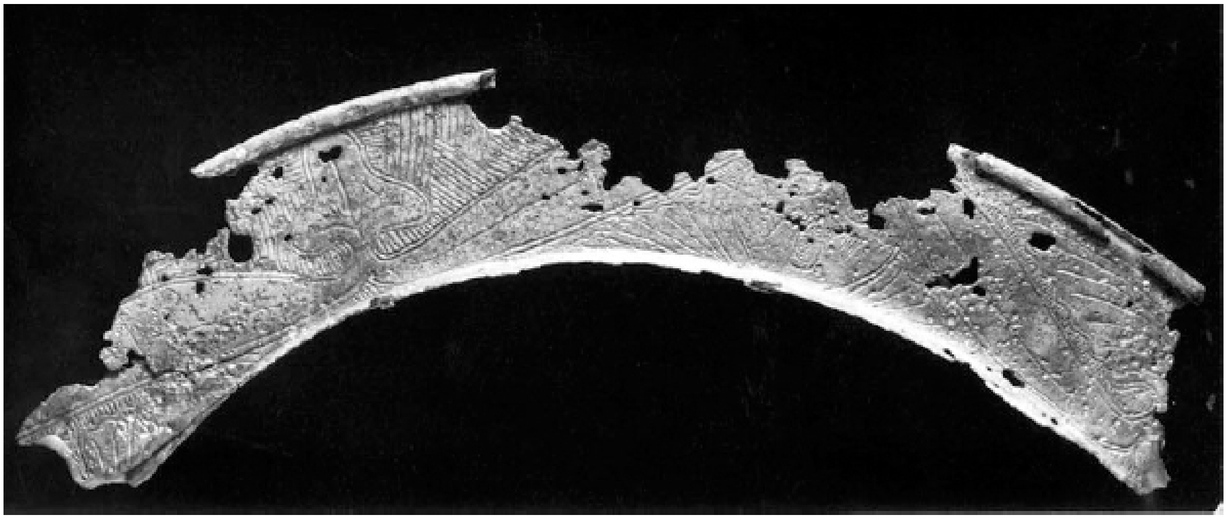

Figure 3.2a. Cerrig-y-Drudion, Conwy. Fragment of bronze ‘crown’. Total diameter 250mm. Photo: © National Museum of Wales

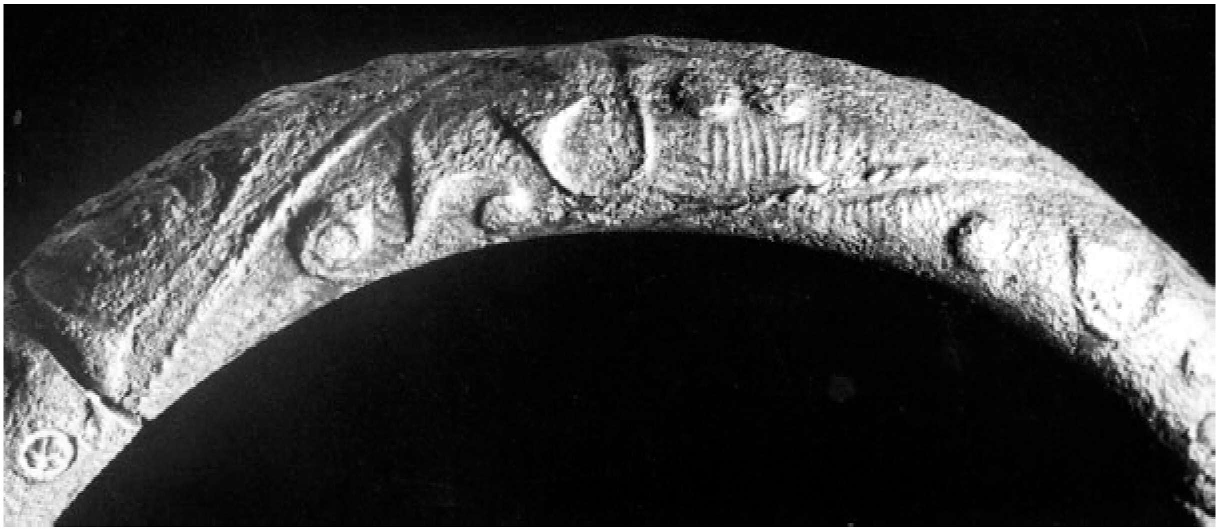

Figure 3.2b. Newnham Croft, Cambridgeshire. Detail of hinged bronze ring. Total diameter 79mm. Photo: J. V. S. Megaw

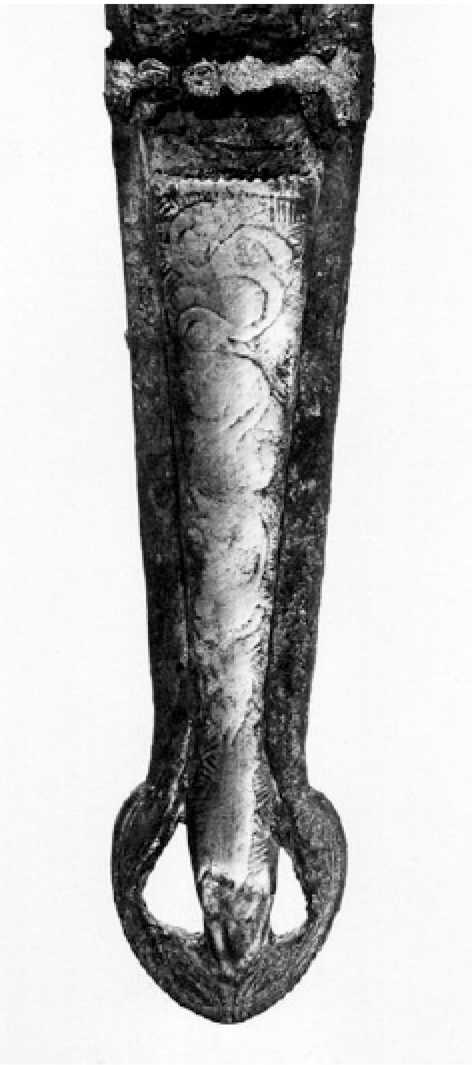

Figure 3.2c. River Thames at Standlake, Oxfordshire. Detail of bronze scabbard mount. Maximum width 50mm. Photo: Ashmolean Museum, Oxford

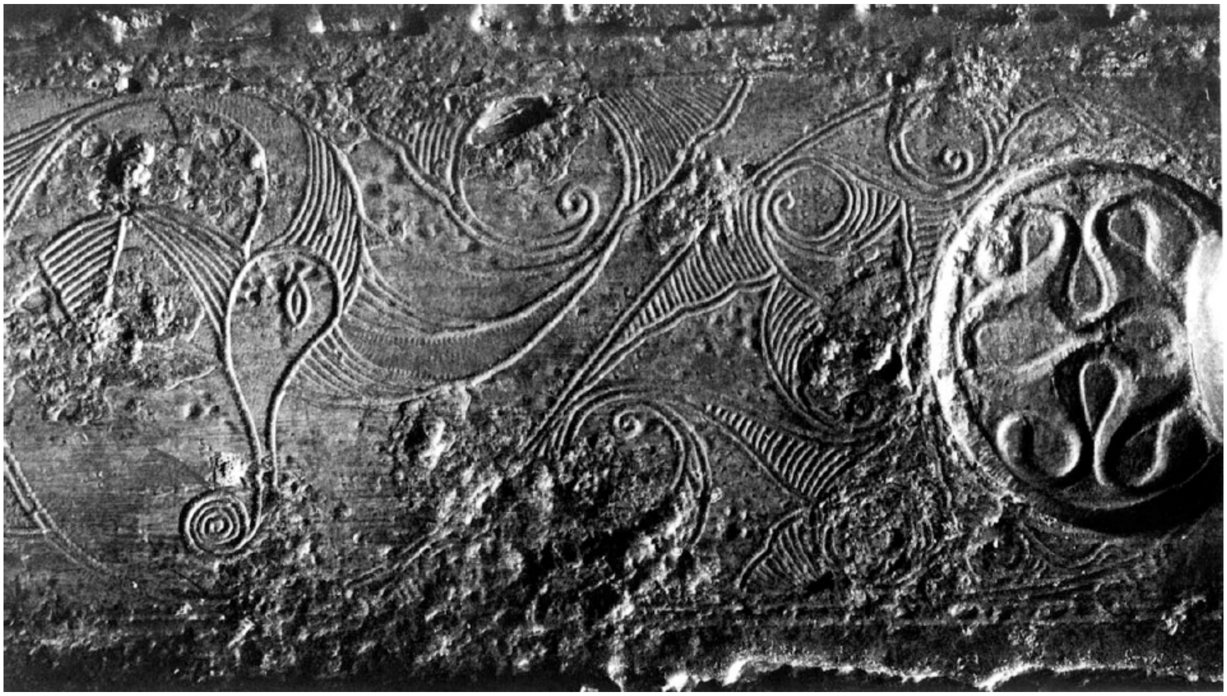

Figure 3.2d. Cernon-sur-Coole, Marne. Detail of iron scabbard. Width 52mm. Photo: Centre de Recherché d'Histoire de la Sidérurgie, Nancy

A slightly later but much more extensive treatment was Sir Cyril Fox's survey of early Celtic art in Britain with its very personal but evocative line illustrations and no less evocative text which attempted a regional and chronological analysis, one largely and undeservedly ignored today (Fox 1958). While he was still following the subsequently discarded idea of a Marnian invasion into north-eastern England as also contributing to the genesis of insular art, it was Fox who first saw a link between the St-Pol-de-Léon pot and the Wisbech, Cambridgeshire scabbard-plate (Jope 2000, no. 28–9 – in what follows we have cited Jope, for so long Paul Jacobsthal's dedicated collaborator, as our primary source) (Figure 3.1b) mentioning in the same context the Cerrig-y-Drudion, Conwy bronze-sheet fragments found in a robbed cist grave. Local product or early import? The jury is still out on that one (compare Megaw 1970, no. 114; Stead 1985b, 32; Jope 2000, no. 29–31) (Figure 3.2a). Fox looked to Jacobsthal's 'Waldalgesheim' style when describing the bronze hinged armring from the warrior grave at Newnham Croft also in Cambridgeshire (Jope 2000, no. 40–3) (Figure 3.2b) – what preferably, following Stéphane Verger

(1987), we should term the ‘Vegetal’ style first evolving late in the fourth century BC but lasting considerably later.

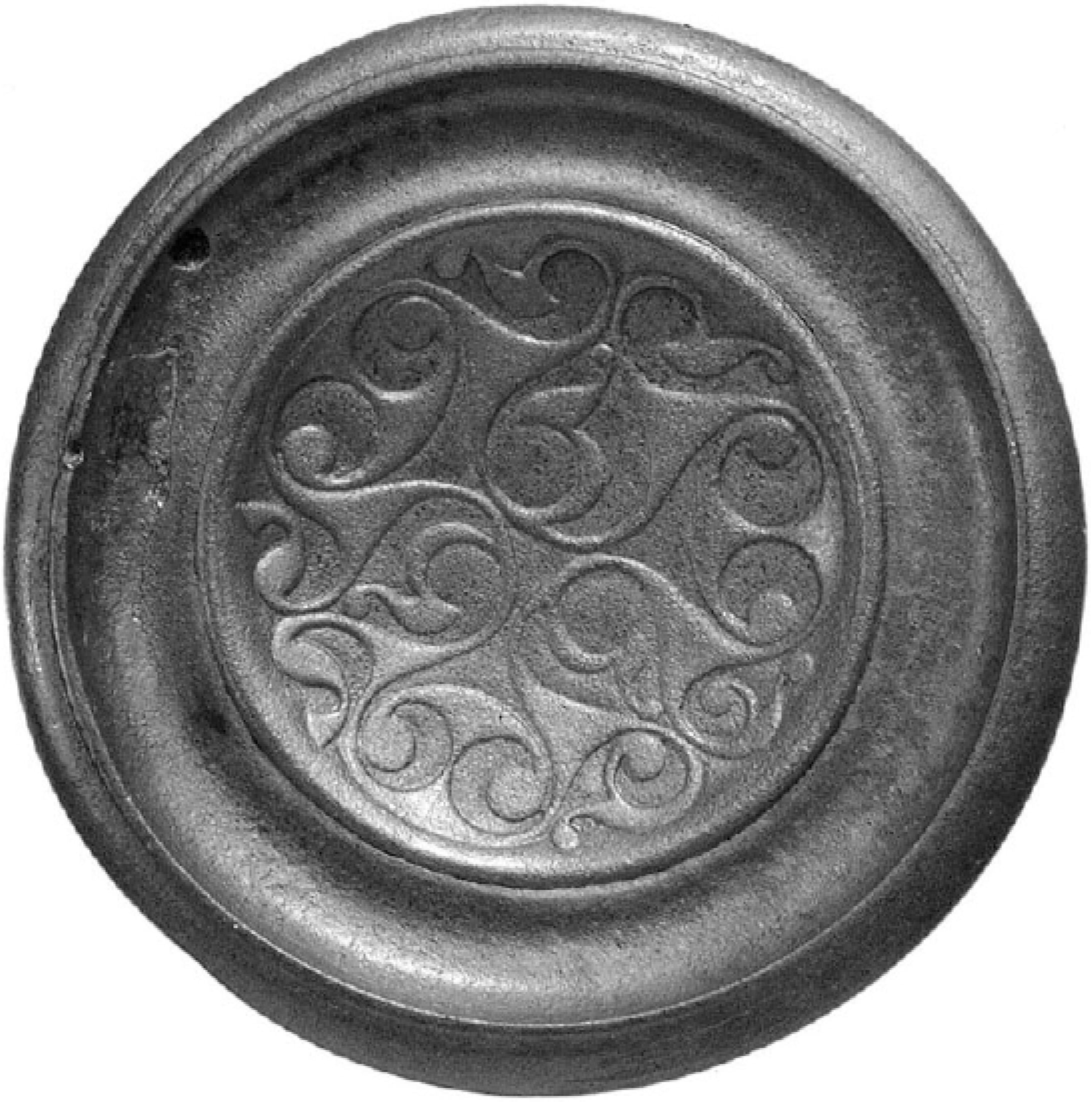

Figure 3.3. ‘River Thames at Brentford’. Bronze mount. Diameter 83mm. Photo: © Museum of London

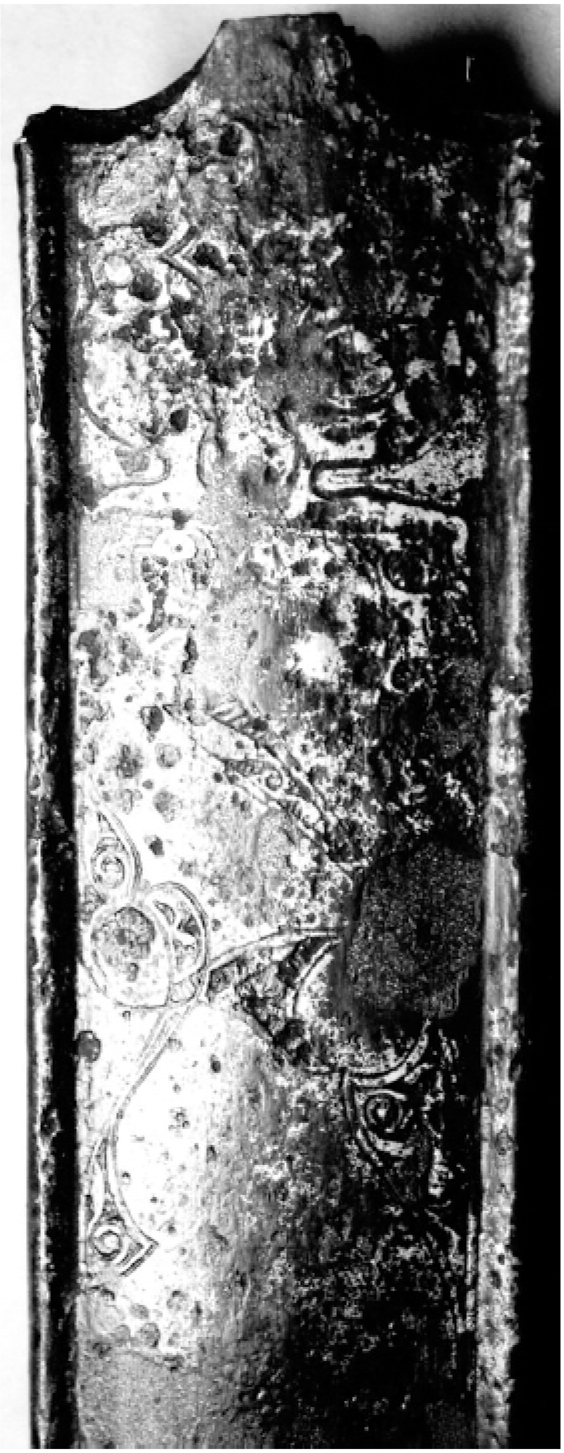

Figure 3.4. Halimba, Veszprém m. Detail of iron scabbard. Width 50mm. Photo: J. V. S. Megaw

Not long after Fox's *Pattern and purpose,* Martyn Jope published an important essay on the beginnings of the Insular La Tène style and a study of British daggers, sketches for his major opus which was not to appear for another 40 years; both were concerned primarily with what he perceived as developments in weapon types on both sides of the Channel (Jope n.d.; 1961b; 2001). If there are few British archaeologists who have considered at first hand Continental Iron Age art in any detail (though see Fitzpatrick 2007), even fewer Continental scholars have studied Insular material. In this Frey is certainly an exception; in a conference paper on early Celtic art in Britain and its Continental background he emphasised the differences rather than the similarities between the two regions with compass-based designs in later insular styles marking a unique re-emergence of a much earlier Continental development. Frey also made much of what he termed ‘the intermittent wave-tendril’ or plant scroll but, again citing Newnham Croft and what has been dubbed ‘the so-called Brentford, Mddx. so-called “horn cap”’ (Jope 2000, no. 302) (Figure 3.3), he pointed out that the British pieces exhibited a much greater ‘looseness’ in their lay-out. On the Insular decorated sword-scabbards Frey not only drew attention to their basic all-over symmetry of design but to other details such as the use of bordering zig-zags as clear indications that once again we are dealing with a class of objects which has already evolved a distinctive style setting it beyond any putative Continental prototype (Frey with Megaw 1976).

Influenced by Frey’s approach, we contributed an essay on the Torrs ‘chamfrein’ whose title ‘From Transdanubia to Torrs’, not only looked back to de Navarro but was based on a continuing first-hand study of the Continental side of the Great Divide (Megaw 1983 – Harding 2002 and 2007, esp. 143–5 regretfully adds little to the discussion either of insular British art in general or of Torrs in particular). In our Torrs paper, we reviewed again the St Pol-de-Léon pot and its possible association with the Cerrig-y-Druidion fragments (Figure 3.1a; 2a) but, just to show how wrong one can be, having followed others – including Frey – in seeing Newnham Croft as a very close cousin to the ‘Vegetal’ style, we picked out the cross-hatched or ‘basketry’ in-filling (which we think we were the first comment on and to illustrate: Megaw 1970, no. 131; 1983, fig. 51 – the photos in Jope 2000, pl. 40a–b, e and 41a are also ours) and stated that this was simply one indication of how un-continental this piece is. On the other hand, in fact, our recent detailed examination of a number of Hungarian swords confirms that basketry, though limited to certain details *is* a feature of, in particular, the eastern sword sub-style which one may illustrate by the sword-scabbard with a Type I dragon-pair from Halimba, Veszprém County (Megaw 1973, esp. 128 and fig. 6; Szabo and Petres 1992, cat. No. 15) (Figure 3.4).

Imports and imitations

While we were concerned more with Continental material with only one rather unsatisfactory excursion into the earliest insular material (Megaw and Megaw 1991), Ian Stead, who had written an essay on imports into Britain to which little can be added today (Stead 1984a), also compiled what without doubt has been the best-selling introduction to Insular Celtic art. He also produced the first of several detailed analyses of key pieces of Iron Age metalwork in his re-examination of the Battersea, London shield (Stead 1985a, b). Sketching out the shape of things to come Stead drew attention once more to Newnham Croft but also to the Standlake, Oxfordshire scabbard, one of the many ‘watery deposited’ finds from the Thames (Jope 2000, no. 48–9) (Figure 3.2c). With its typical La Tène A chape-end and sword blade and a classic ‘Vegetal’ wave-tendril, presumably one can date it to the later fourth or third century. But already there are departures from what one would expect on a true Continental piece – note the dense basketry.

Martyn Jope in his truly millennial *magnum opus* devoted a chapter to what he terms ‘The emergence of Insular Celtic art’ (Jope 2000, 17–52). He begins his examination of what he terms ‘the multiple *genesis* of early Celtic art in Britain’ with a study of the daggers or short swords from the Thames some at least presumed to be of earlier, Hallstatt D date. Following his 1961 study (Jope 1961a), Jope acknowledges that perhaps with one exception, all known examples, which he dates from the sixth to the third or even to the second century, are of local production. Indeed, we might add that, far from early, at least one from the Thames at Hammersmith with a complex curvilinear openwork sheath (Jope 2000, no. 25b–f) is best paralleled by a number of continental short swords dating to La Tène D (see Werner 1977; Böhme-Schönberger 1998, esp. 239–48 and Abb. 6). Jope, with his scientist’s skill for analytical description which is the real strength of *Early Celtic art in the British Isles*, discusses all the usual suspects starting with Cerrig-y-Druidion; he admits that the ‘piece would stand quite isolated as a product of a workshop in Britain’ while indicating that ‘the setting of a positive design against a hatch-textured field’ is ‘distinctive of insular work’ (Figure 3.2a) and cites again the Newnham Croft ring and the Standlake scabbard (Jope 2000, 23–5). The latter (Figure 3.2c) he regards as a composite piece finally put together no later than the early third century but obviously close to the traditions of the ‘Vegetal’ style which certainly in Central Europe extends well into that date as evidenced, for example, by the cast belt-loop on the Cernon-sur-Coole, Marne scabbard from a LT C warrior cremation grave in the Marne, which must have been made anything up to a century after the early development of the tendril-based motif (Jacobsthal 1944, no. 113; Megaw 1970, no. 113; 1973; 1983, 139) (Figure 3.2d). It has to said that Jope, like most other commentators on Insular art, lacked an in-depth knowledge of the putative contemporary Continental material but we wholly agree with his comments on the bronze Witham, Lincolnshire scabbard mount: ‘direct influence from east Celtic armouries cannot be pressed; closer analysis… stresses again the maturity of insular tradition’ (Jope 2000, 28–30). There is little save the diagonal lay-out of the surviving upper and lower mounts which compares with the so-called Hungarian style – better regarded simply as one of several local sub-styles. One may cite here one of the two decorated scabbards from Tapolca-Szentkút also in Veszprém County and its combination of the band of ‘Vegetal’ ornament on a piece most recently placed in the early third century initial phase of the Hungarian Sword Style (Szabó and Petres 1992, cat. no. 72) (Figure 3.5).

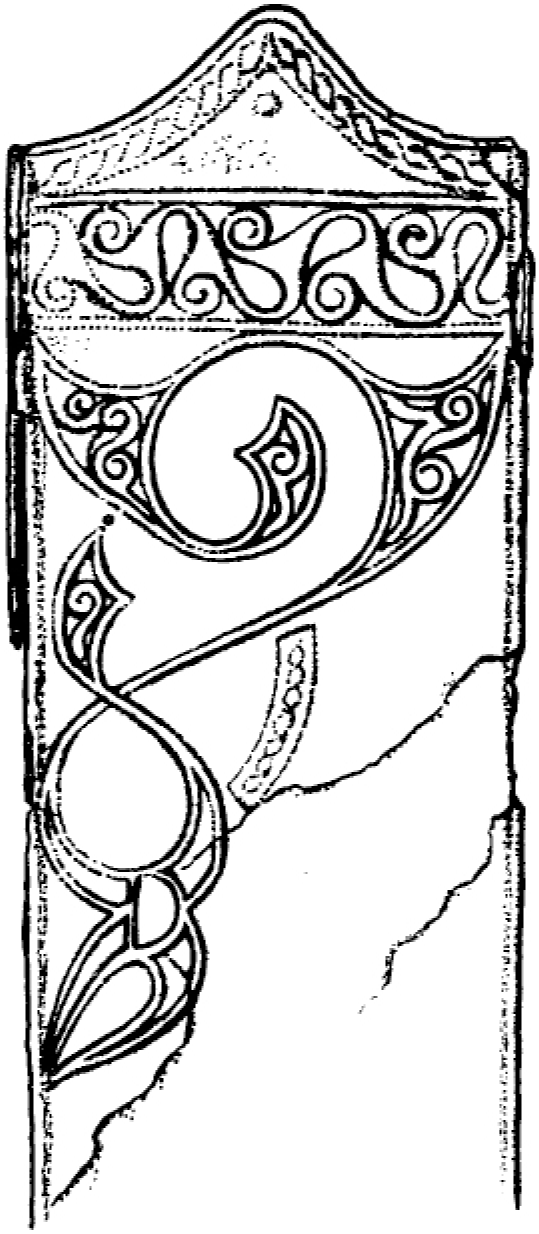

Figure 3.5. Tapolca-Szentkút, Veszprém m. Detail of iron scabbard. Width 60mm. Drawing: after Szabó and Petres 1992

Among those with first-hand knowledge of Continental as well as Insular material is Barry Raftery who has recently given a succinct and up-to-date summary of what he is happy to title ‘The insular Celts’ (Raftery 2006). Suffice it here to observe that, while he too notes echoes of the Continent in the north-eastern Yorkshire scabbard chape-ends with their general similarities to the so-called Hatvan-Boldog type of Central Europe, practically nothing is definitely claimed as an import with the exception of one of the two ‘dragon-pair’ scabbards from the Thames excavated by Ian Stead a number of years ago, like so much else, from the reserves of the British Museum (Stead 1984b) – and, as we shall comment below, we are not so sure even about that (Figure 3.6a).

Let us now examine a selection of more-or-less chronologically ordered candidates as emigrants with or without residence status. As we have remarked, there is precious little currently to add to Ian Stead’s 1984 paper. More generally however a number of recent continental studies have had to make a distinction between what can be ascribed to those intrusive cultures which we shall continue to term ‘La Tène’ and imitations or variations produced by indigenous but certainly not by anyone’s definition, Celtic communities (see Dobrzanska, Megaw and Poleska 2005). In this connection, in trying to explain to students concerned with aspects of style, either ancient or modern, we have devised an aphorism which we first gave an airing to in our re-analysis of the Torrs ‘chamfrein’; it goes like this: “‘Similar to’ is not the same as ‘same as’” (Megaw 1983, 140), a motto perhaps for what now follows.

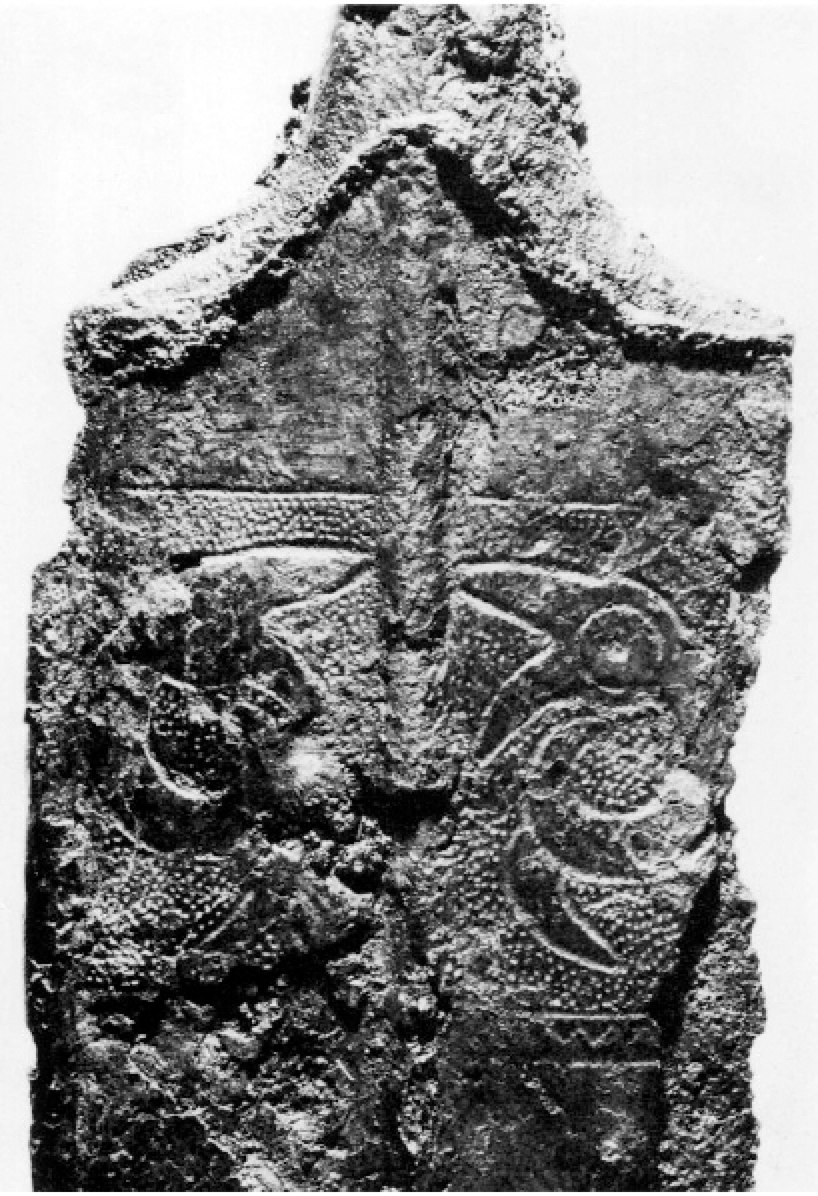

Figure 3.6a. River Thames at Hammersmith. Detail of iron sword and scabbard. Width 51mm. © Copyright the Trustees of The British Museum

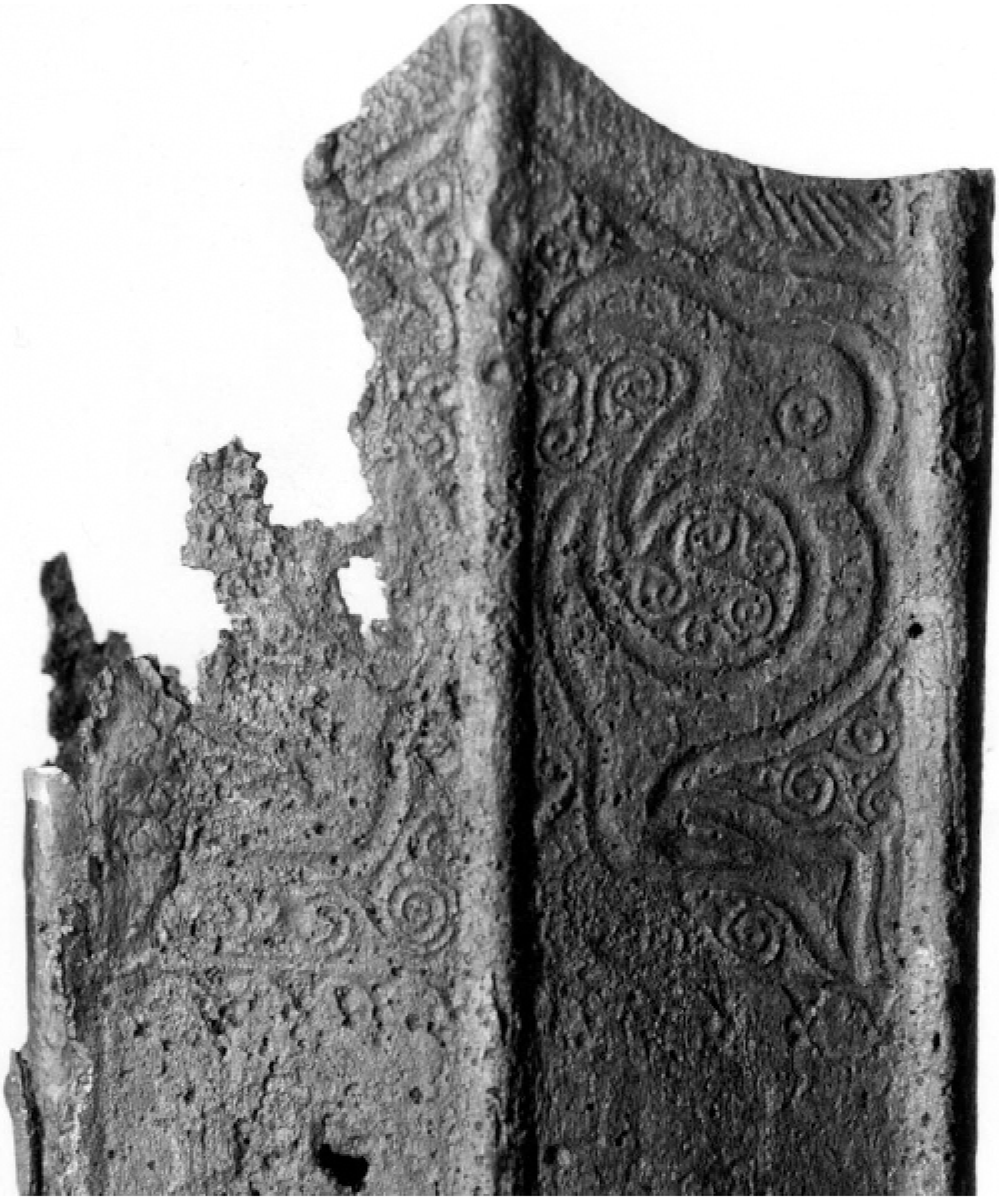

Figure 3.6b. Kosd, Pestm., grave 2. Detail of iron scabbard. Width 50mm.
Photo: J. V. S. Megaw

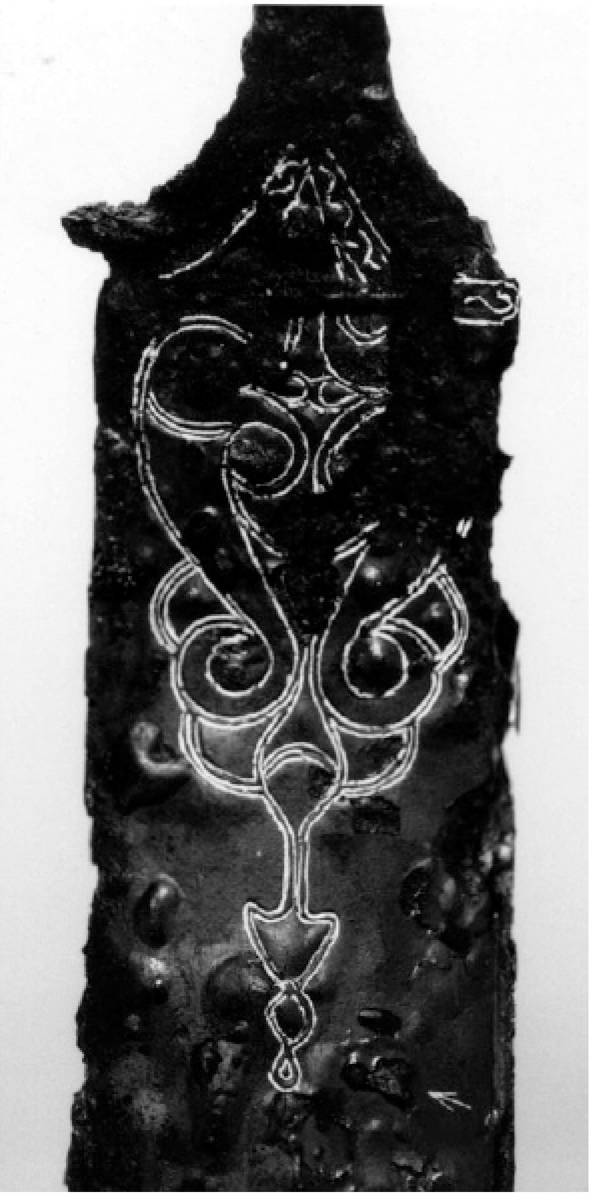

Figure 3.6c. Förker Laas Riegel, Nötsch, Carinthia. Detail of iron scabbard (the white in-fill is modern). Width c.50mm. Photo: J. V. S. Megaw

As regards brooches, many writers before Jope, notably Hull and Hawkes (1987), have observed while there are a few certain imports, Britain appears early – that is already perhaps in the fifth or fourth century – to have started its own variations of basically La Tène A brooch forms, particularly those with a high arched bow (Jope 2000, esp. 39–45 and no. 34). Similarly if perhaps a little later we can observe in the Balkans variations on the La Tène B1 ‘Duchcov’ type (Bouzek 2005). Then there is the Danebury, Hampshire openwork disc, we hear someone say. This little cast bronze piece, a mere six centimetres in diameter, from a storage pit securely dated to the fourth century has been claimed by Jope as an obvious import to be compared with a range of early La Tène chariot- or harness-fittings from the Ardennes south as far as the Danube (Cunliffe and Poole 1991, 331–2 and fig. 7:8; Jope 2000, no. 31g; compare Schaaff 1973, Taf. 45) (Figure 3.7a–b). But the elements of the Danebury design do not match up well when set for example beside the circular discs from chariot grave 4 at Léglise in the Belgium Ardennes (Cahen-Delhaye 1975, esp. Abb. 7b–c). Closer to Continental mounts are the three openwork discs from the Thames at Hammersmith which Jope (2000, 31b–d), uses, not very convincingly, to bolster a Continental source for Danebury (Figure 3.7c). These in turn may be compared compare with the Anloo, Drenthe hoard in the Netherlands, the most northerly example of the openwork mounts, discovered in 1938 but still awaiting full publication (Beuker, van der Sanden and van Vilsteren 1991, 42 and fig. 49) (Figure 3.7d).

Returning to the Insular decorated sword-scabbards can we detect a more definite starting–point for the beginning of indigenous styles? If one refers to the corpus of swords by that cautious recording angel of British Iron Age art, Ian Stead, two poorly preserved example from the River Witham at Fiskerton, Lincolnshire, one with traces of coral inlay are perhaps closer than any other British find to a typical La Tène A form (Stead 2006, cat. nos. 4 and 6). Fiskerton, which as a probable ‘watery’ deposition site with a long history is Britain’s answer to the type-site of La Tène, has also produced an ornate coral-inlaid sword-hilt with patterns which Stead relates to the stylistic developments which took place immediately before the flourishing of the true ‘Vegetal’ style in the late fourth century but which we would prefer to see as a little later – and surely locally produced – piece (Megaw and Megaw 1991, 290–4 and fig. 6; Stead 2006, cat. no. 54) (Figure 3.8a). Local too is the antler handle of a file, also from Fiskerton which exhibits a rather poor version of a wave tendril (Field and Parker Pearson 2003, no. 364, esp. 67–70 and fig. 4:16) (Figure 3.8b). The excavators comment: ‘Its creator might have seen an object decorated with a wave-tendril and that object might have been the … Ratcliffe [on Soar, Nottinghamshire] shield-boss’. This last find, like some 35% of all British fine metalwork from a watery context, is as close as anything known to us from an insular context to a true ‘Vegetal’ lay-out, albeit it decorates a typically British shield-boss (Watkin et al. 1996) (Figure 3.8c). Having in mind Fiskerton’s position which looks west to what was clearly a key area in the later story of the development of insular art and east across the North Sea and the westernmost extension of the ‘Vegetal’ style, it is tempting to see the site as a kind of artistic entrepôt between the two regions.

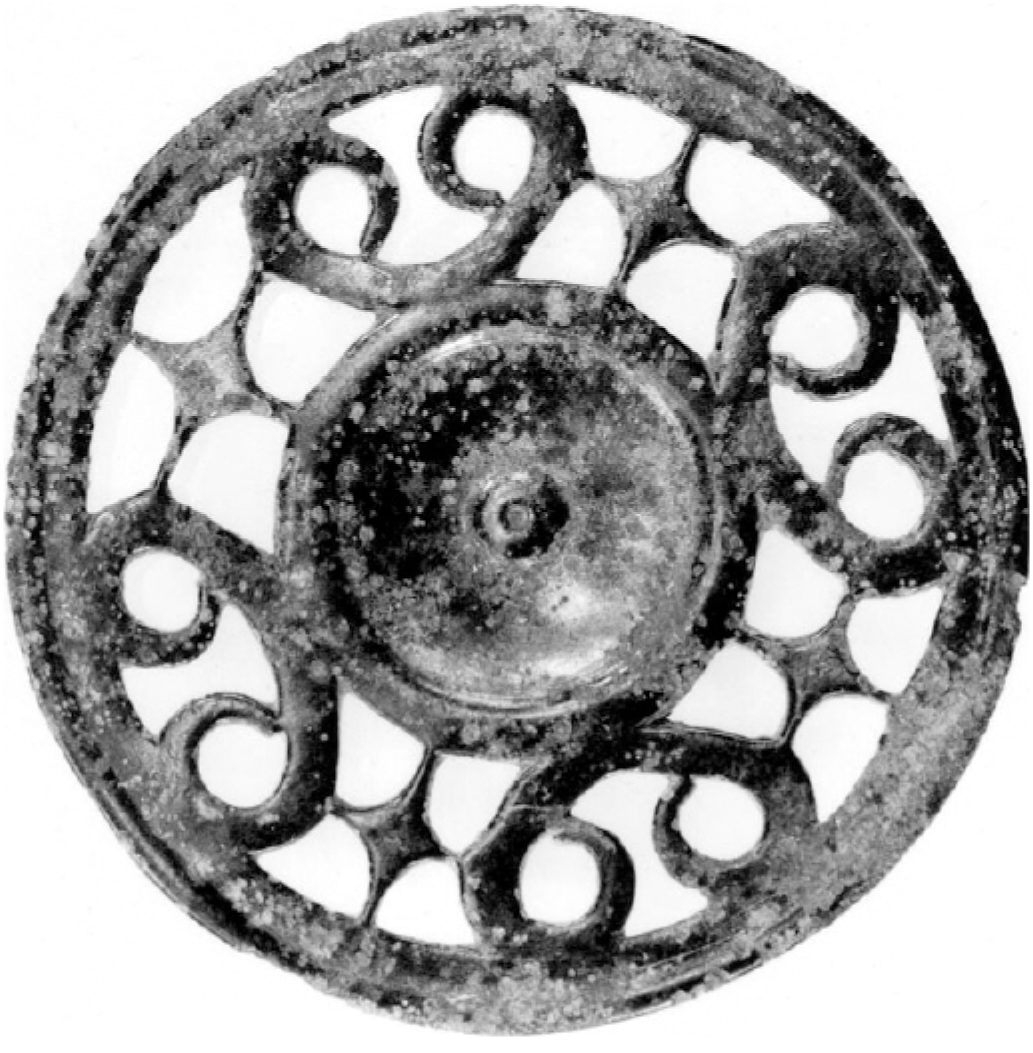

Figure 3.7a. Danebury hillfort, Hampshire. Bronze openwork disc. Diameter 59mm. Photo: Institute of Archaeology, University of Oxford

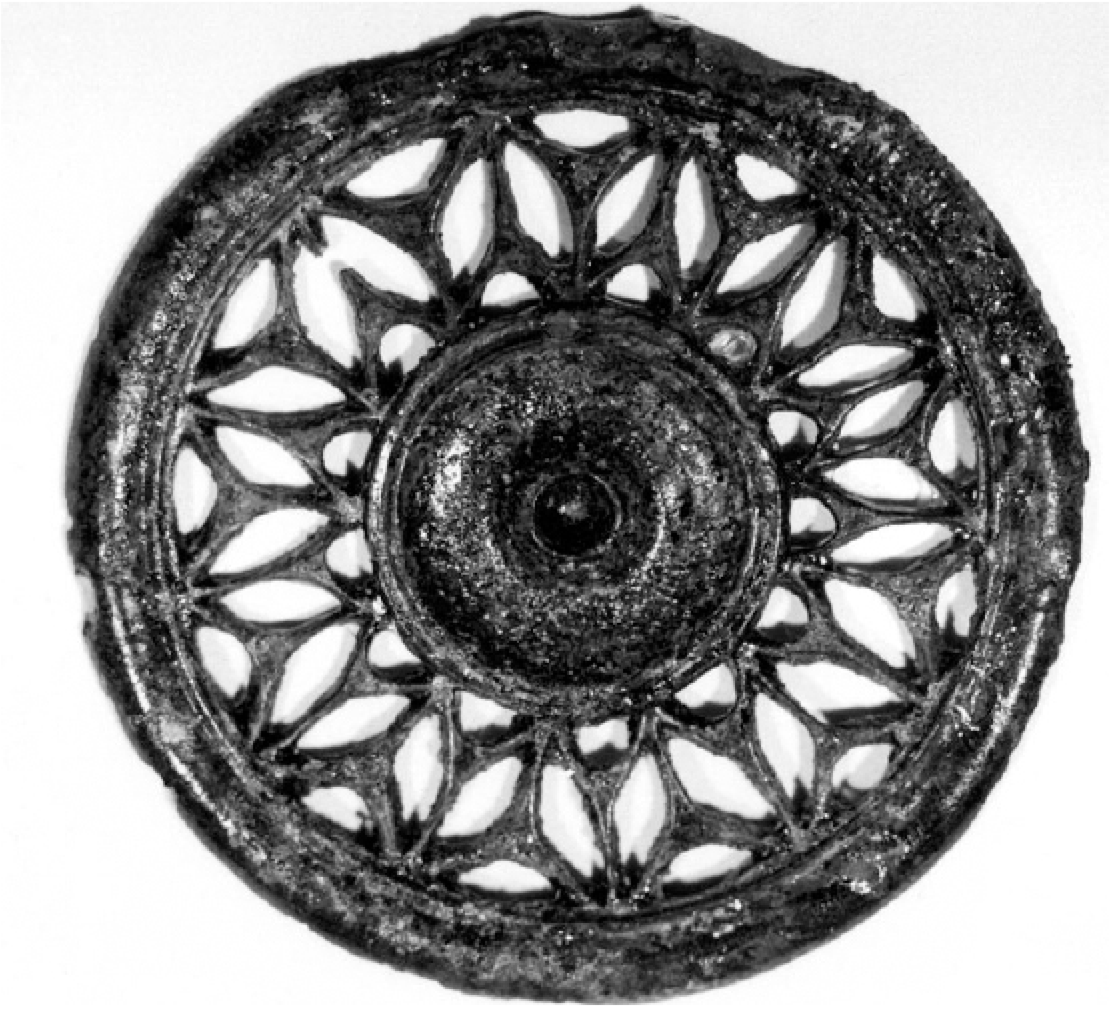

Figure 3.7b. ‘Gohimont’, Léglise, com. Neufchâteau, barrow 4, grave 1, Belgian Luxembourg. Openwork bronze disc. Diameter c.40mm. Photo: Musées royeaux d’Art et d’Histoire, Bruxelles

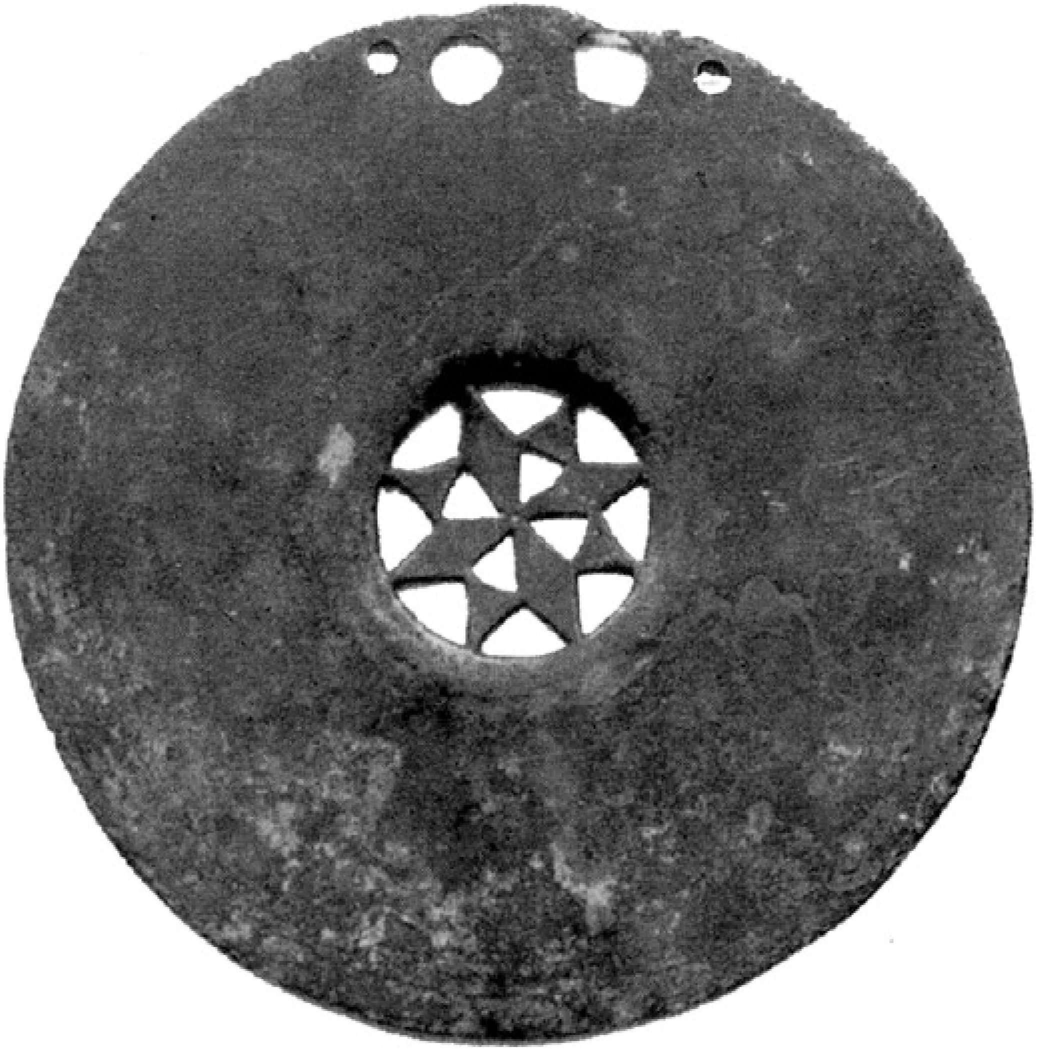

Figure 3.7c. River Thames at Hammersmith. Bronze disc. Diameter 72mm.
Photo: E. M. Jope

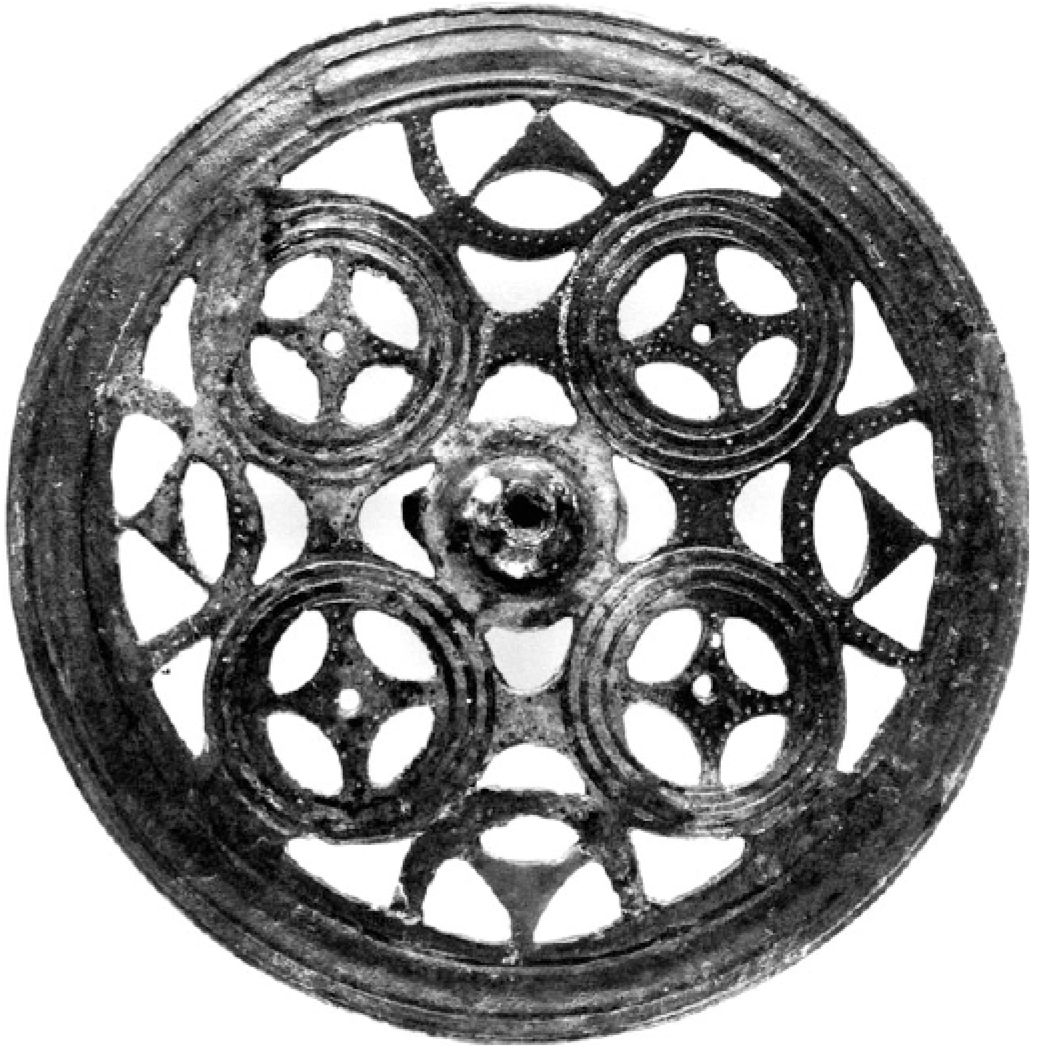

Figure 3.7d. Anloo, Drenthe. Openwork bronze disc. Diameter 85mm. Photo: Drents Museum, Assen

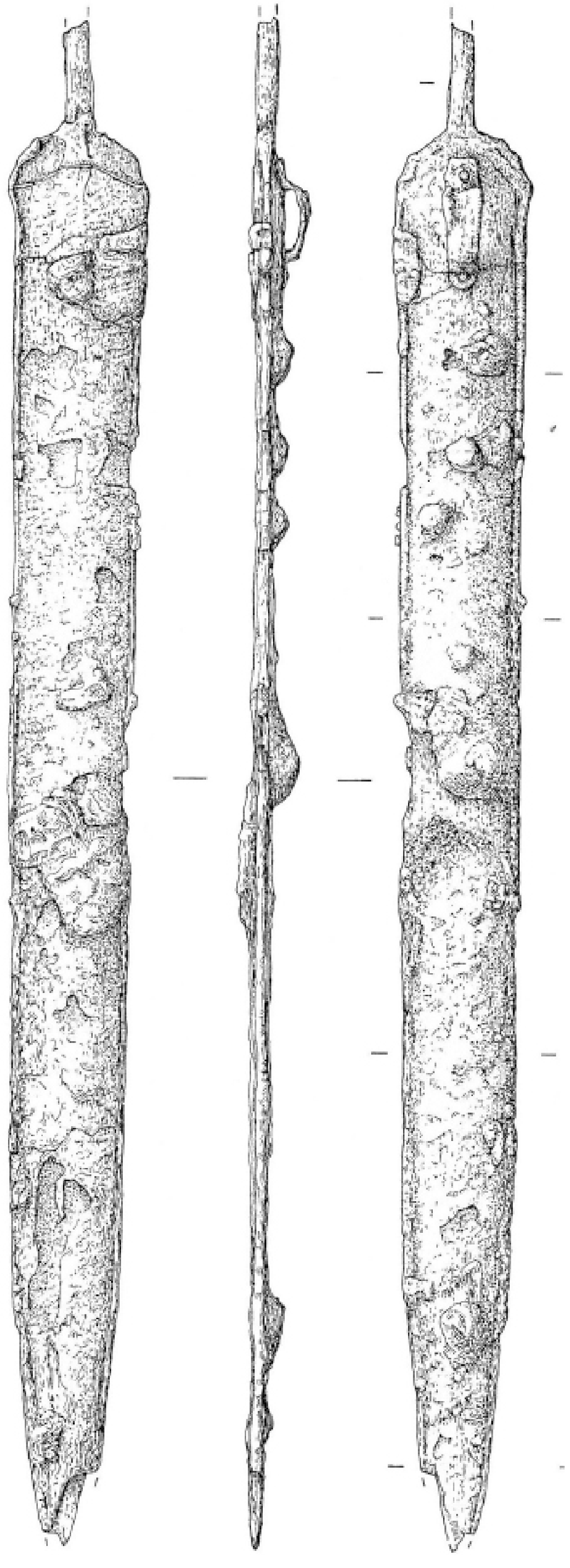

Figure 3.8a. River Witham at Fiskerton, Lincolnshire. ‘The Museum Sword’. Length 630mm. Drawing: after Field and Parker Pierson, 2003

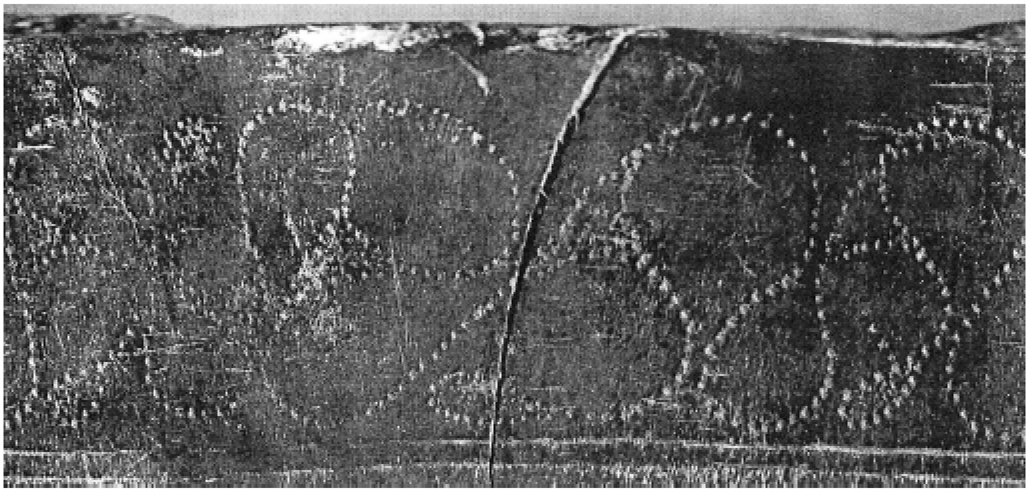

Figure 3.8b. River Witham at Fiskerton, Lincolnshire. Detail of antler handle for iron rasp. Height of detail c.20mm. © Copyright the Trustees of The British Museum

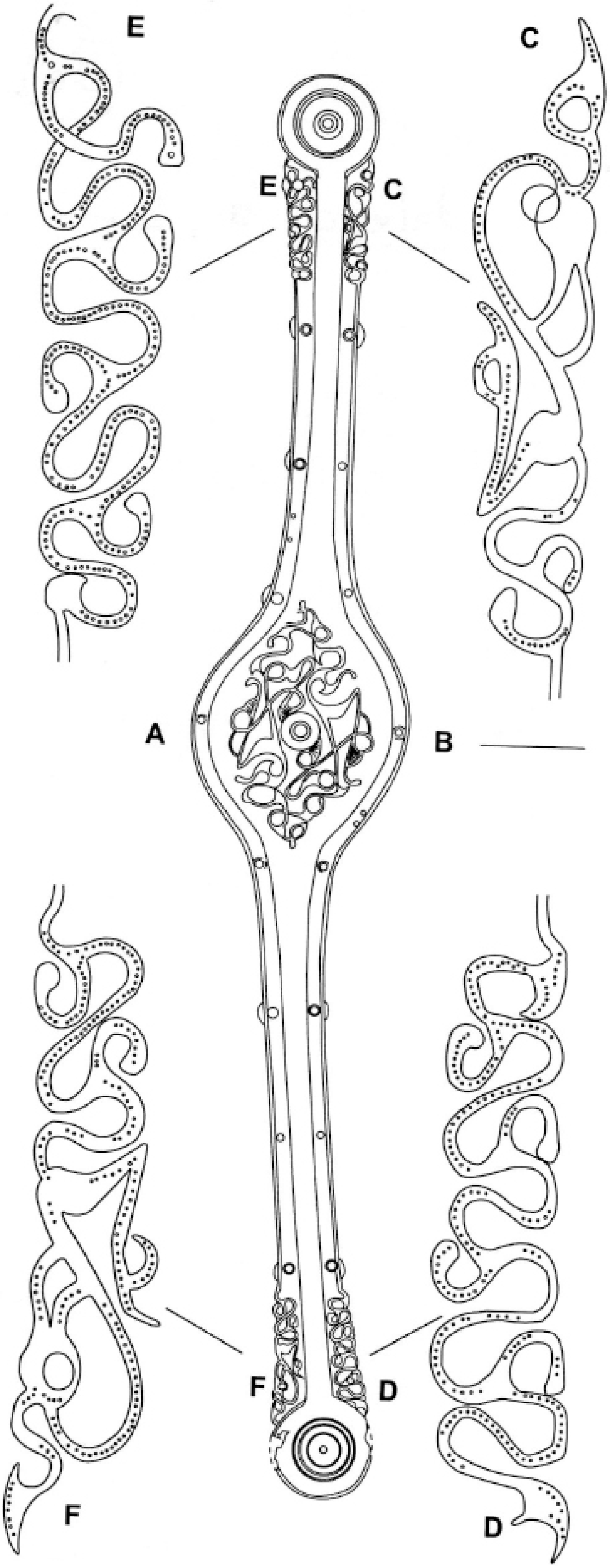
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Figure 3.8c. River Trent, near Ratcliffe-on-Soar, Nottinghamshire. Bronze shield mount. Length c.829mm. Drawing: after Watkin et al. 1996

To return to the artefacts. The two examples of the so-called ‘dragon-pair’ from the Thames are another case in point (Stead 1984b; 2006, cat. no. 2 and 8). They are the most westerly examples of a ubiquitous symbol dating from La Tène B2 into well into La Tène C which extends east to the Balkans. However, despite Stead’s placing them – one more firmly than the other – in two of the three typological classes first devised by De Navarro, neither is in fact that close if one compares that from Hammersmith (Figure 3.6a) with the Type I example from the Kosd, Nógrád County cemetery near Budapest (Szabó and Petres 1992, cat. no. 36) (Figure 3.6b). Is this another example of insular adaptation? Something similar seems to have been going on in the local workshop which produced the swords and their scabbards found in a ritual hoard at the Förker Laas Riegel in Carinthia, another key find which awaits adequate publication and where the decoration on the scabbards is hardly worthy of the name (Schaaff 1990, esp. Abb. 6; Megaw and Megaw 2001a, ills. 451–3) (Figure 3.6c). Another Thames sword find shows a lack of design cohesion which one gets not so much with the copying but rather the misunderstanding of the putative model (Stead 2006, cat. no. 11) (Figure 3.9a). We may cite here a fragmentary sword-scabbard from a local warriors grave at Pavolche in Vratsa County, north-western Bulgaria (Megaw et al. 2000) (Figure 3.9b). Towards the mouth is what one might read as the ghost of a dragon-pair; the rest of the design consists of fragmentary palmettes, comparable to those on the Thames example. Again, there is the Fovant, Wiltshire scabbard (Figure 3.9c) which may also be compared with Pavolche as a regional variation on a Continental theme; it is obviously based on the basic lyre form of the dragon-pair but, as Stead (2006, cat. no. 53) says, it is clearly a British product.

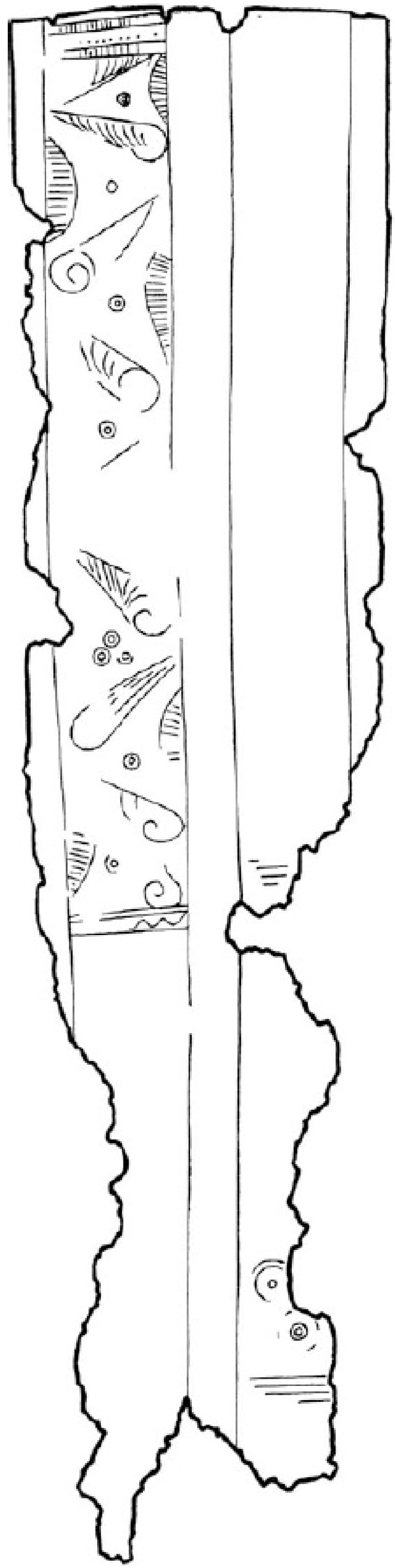


Figure 3.9a. River Thames at Hammersmith, ‘opposite Harrods’. Fragment of an iron scabbard. Length 203mm. Drawing: after Stead, 2006

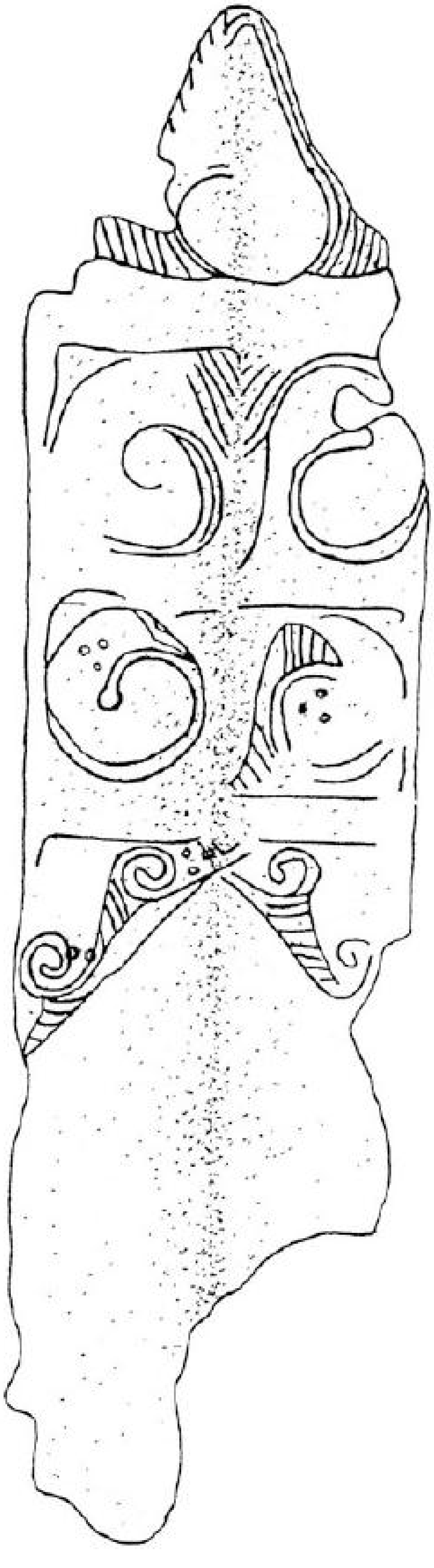


Figure 3.9b. Kopanata Mogila, Pavolche, Vratsa county. Fragmentary iron scabbard. Length 191mm. Drawing: Museum of History, Vratsa

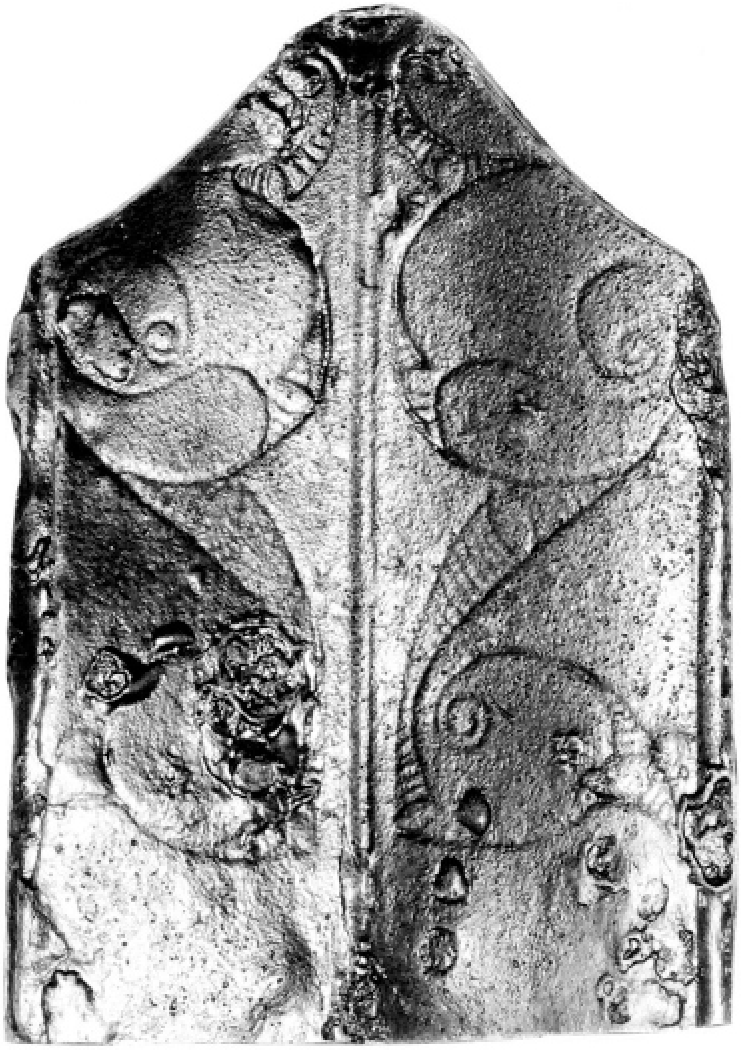
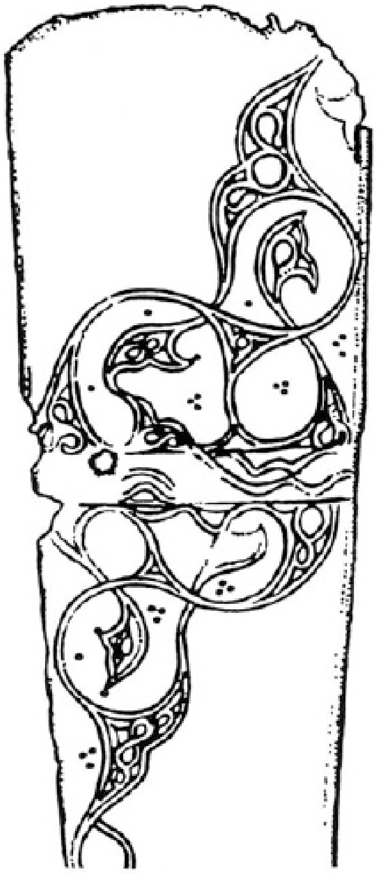


Figure 3.9c. Fovant, Wiltshire. Width 45mm. © Copyright the Trustees of The British Museum

Here we must draw attention, however briefly, to one motif of sword engraving which seems to link Insular and Continental work. Another feature of the Pavolche scabbard is the use of three dots in a sort of pawnbroker's symbol (Figure 3.10a). As Barry Raftery has pointed out, this is a motif to be found on a number of Middle La Tène decorated Continental sword- scabbards, mostly from Hungary including that from Halimba and one example from the Marne, the sword from Cernon-sur-Coole, both pieces referred to briefly above (Raftery 1994, esp. f490 and fig. 7; 2006, 124 and fig. 24; Megaw et al. 2000, 32 and fig. 7) (Figure 3.10b). However, our recent re-examination of the Hungarian examples suggests to us that Raftery may see more dots than we do; notwithstanding, here is yet more intriguing evidence of possible pan-European symbolic as well as stylistic links. But as to the design components which one can find on the Irish scabbards, it is sufficient to quote Otto-Herman Frey's view:

> 'The dynamics inherent in designs such as those from Lisnacrogher result from the tapering and swelling produced by … staggering S-motifs. These dynamic designs are typical of the art of the islands. Not before the third century BC can remotely similar designs be found on the Continent' (Frey 1998, 96).



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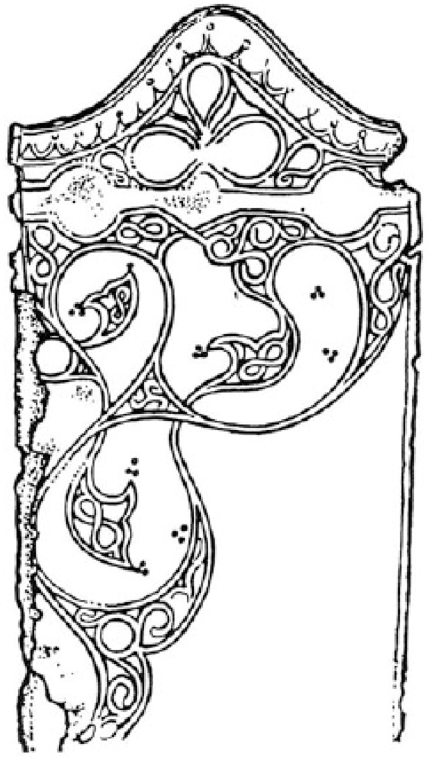

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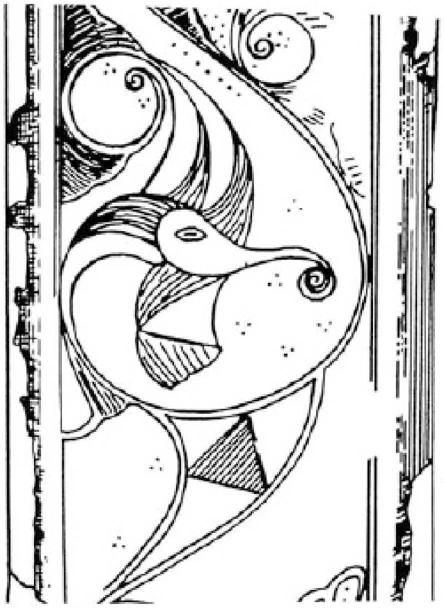

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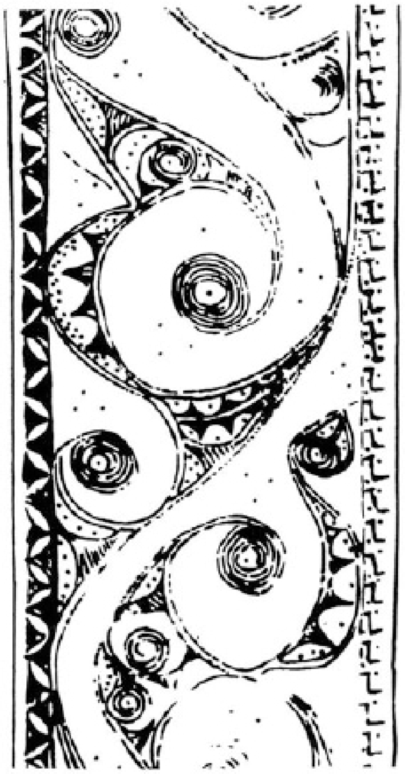

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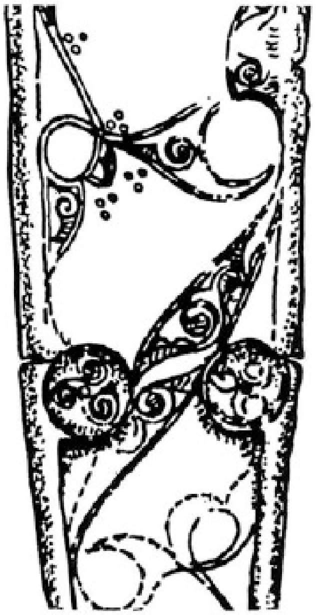

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Figure 3.10a. Details of sword scabbards with triple-dot designs. (1–2) Bölscke-Madocsahegy, Tolna m.; (3) Cernon-sur-Coole, Marne (see Figure 3.2d); River Bann, Co. Derry; (5) Halimba, Veszprém m. (see Figures 3.4 and 3.10b). All c.50 mm max. width. Drawing: Raftery, 1994

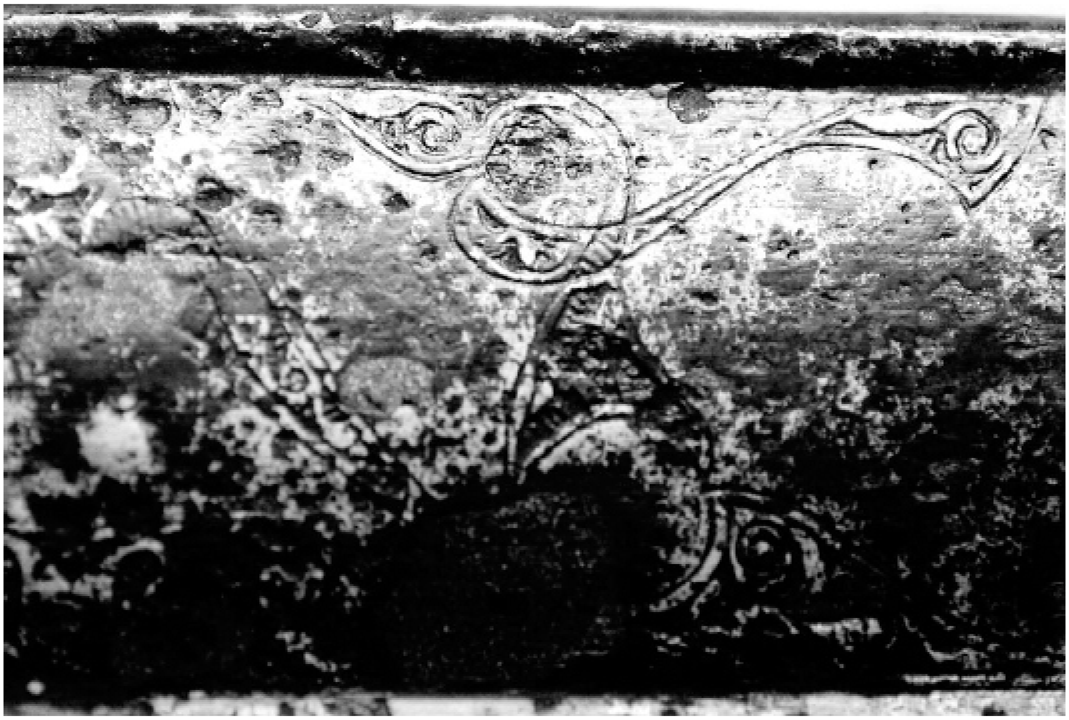
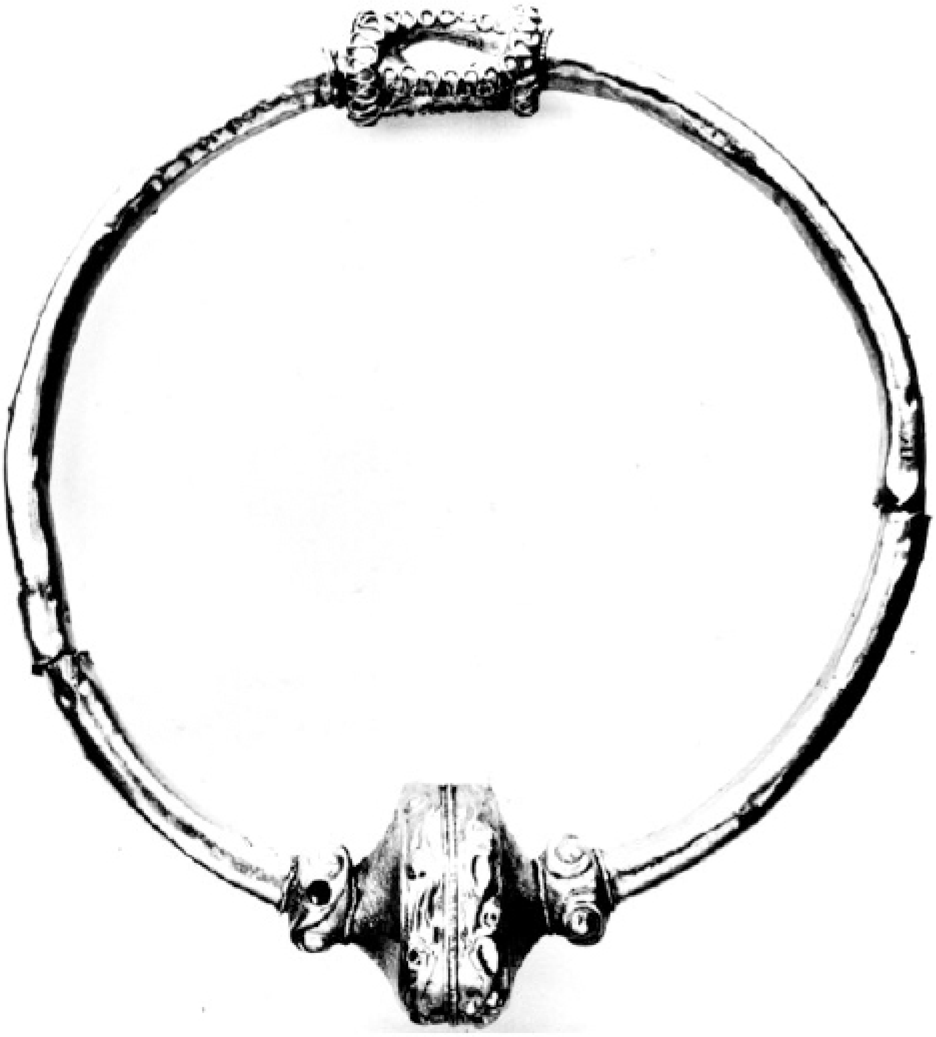


Figure 3.10b. Halimba, Veszprém m. Detail of iron scabbard (see Figure 3.4). Photo: J. V. S. Megaw

Finally, it would be perverse of us not at least to illustrate the gold buffer-torc now known to have come from Knock, County Roscommon, where it had been found together with a local gold ribbon example (Raftery 1984, 175–8 and fig. 93; 2006, 121 and ill. 20) (Figure 3.11a). There is absolutely no doubt that in general this has close parallels in La Tène B2 rings of the Middle Rhine and further south; the intertwined motif of the curious ‘box’ at the rear of Knock can be found in more easterly but contemporary goldwork (Megaw et al. 2007; Hansen 2007). And that fine products were finding their way north and west as part of a complex trade in prestige goods may also be seen in a recent gold find from Heerlen, Dutch Limburg in the south of the Netherlands – a slender torc which has its parallels in a range of rings mostly of La Tène B date from Lorraine and the Hunsrück-Eifel (Verhart 2006, 6–7 and fig. 4; 2007, 155 and ill. on p. 133; compare Möller 2000, esp. Abb. 7) (Figure 3.11b).

Where, then, does all this leave us? Many years ago we warned against ‘the seductive sin of trait-chasing’ (Megaw 1975, 17) and it should be clear that there continue to be very few undisputed imports of fine metalwork from the Continent. While the seeming links with the various Middle La Tène sub-styles seem hard to tie down, those with the clearly chronologically overlapping ‘Vegetal’ style as represented at Fiskerton are clearer. Even though we still seem to lack a complete evolutionary story to prove the link between Continental and Insular sword sub-styles (Megaw 1983; Raftery 2004), we remain convinced that a link there must be – a point of view made much more tenable now that the geographical gap which existed in De Navarro’s day has been filled by such important Western sites as the Gournay-sur-Aronde, Oise sanctuary with its mass of weapons of Middle or La Tène C1 date including at least 40 decorated sword-scabbards; these are to be attributed to not one but several different workshops or sub-styles (Lejars 1994). Other questions are harder still; in the ‘Arras culture’ do we have to look to at least one immigrant, ‘perhaps a well-connected evangelist’ (Stead 1991, 184) or more generally, following our earlier quotation from Wheeler, for a concatenation of especially favourable circumstances? Stylistic innovations do not fly. Just as Colin Renfrew observed many years ago and in a very different context, always to be kept in mind are those most significant of all invisible exports, the export of ideas (Renfrew 1973, 110–1), so too with the genesis of insular Celtic art which cannot have occurred without contact – and, yes, settlement by intrusive groups.



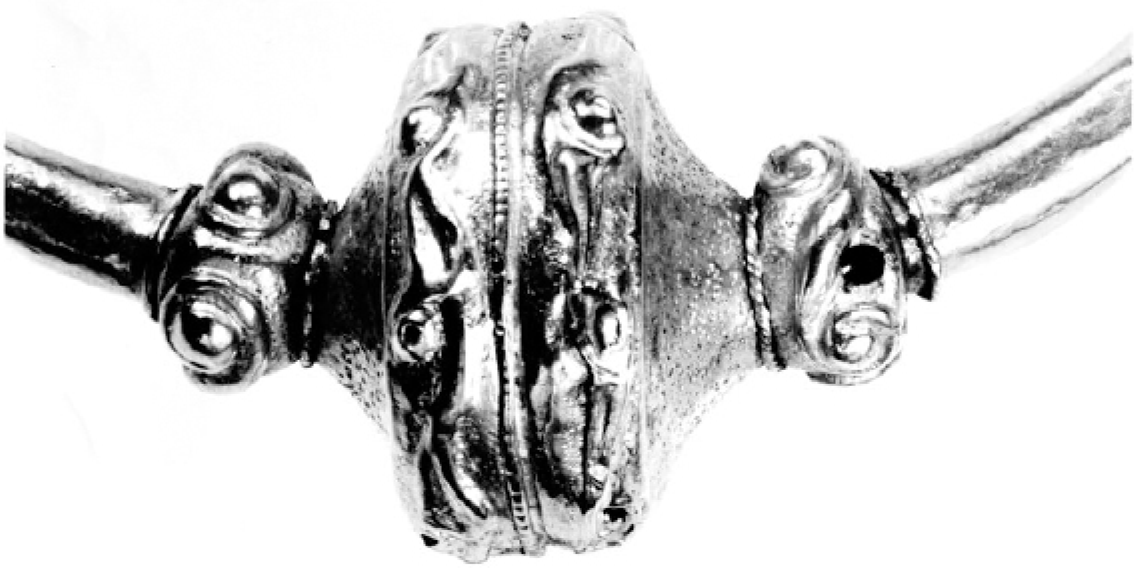


Figure 3.11a. Knock, co. Roscommon. Gold torc, diameter 130mm with (below left) detail of terminal, diam. 38mm. Photos: National Museum of Ireland

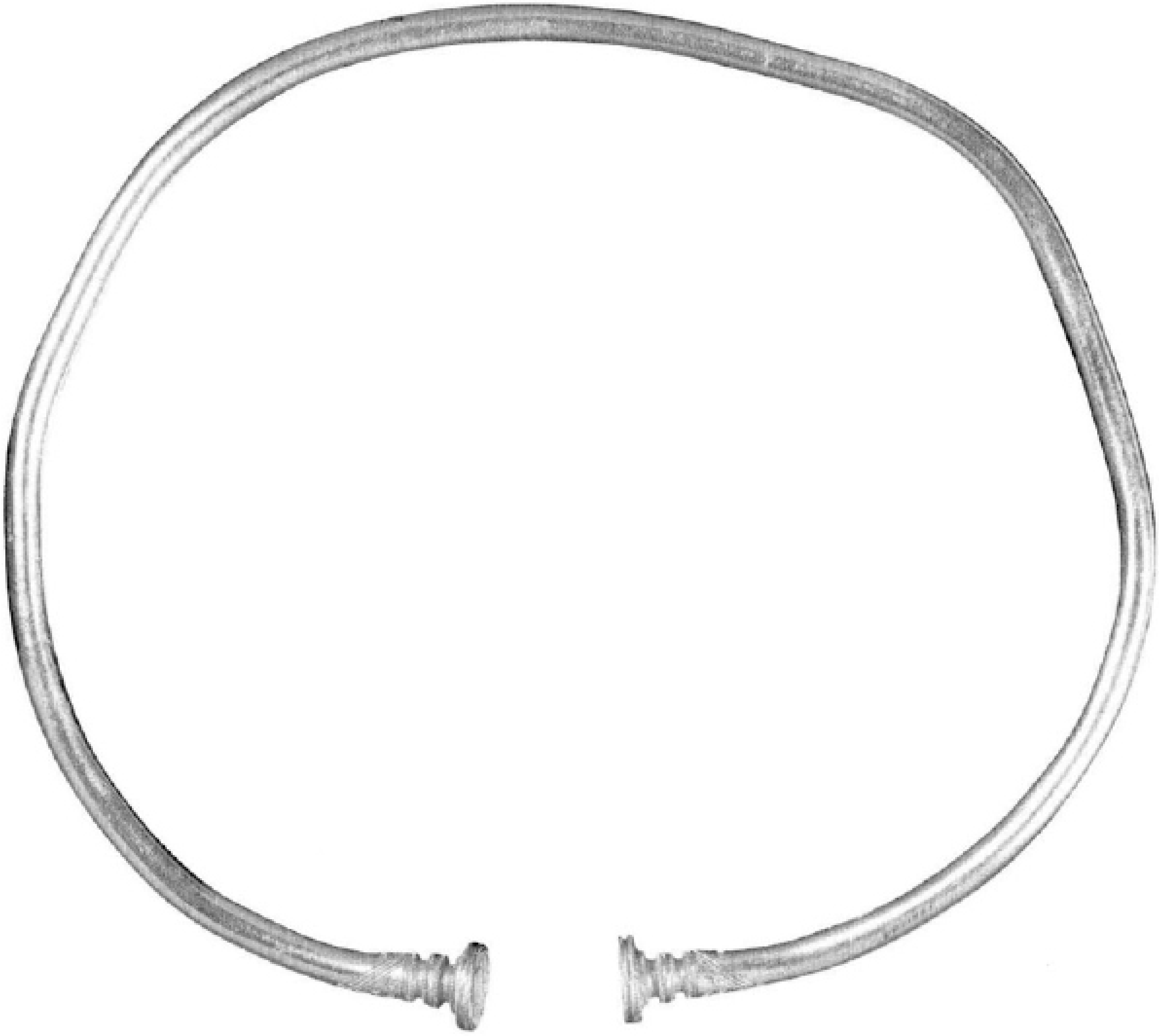


Figure 3.11b. Heerlen, Dutch Limburg. Gold torc. Diameter 165 mm. Photo: Rijksmuseum voor Oudheden, Leiden

Where, how and when?

So again, where first, how and when? Collis (2007) is surely right to emphasize that however close early British (and Irish) La Tène types – of brooches or of swords and their scabbards – might at first seems they soon diverge from their presumed prototypes. Despite the work of more than a century, it would seem that the mystery largely remains. As we have recently suggested with regard to the genesis of Continental early La Tène art, it is still nigh impossible to point to any *single* region as demonstrating the development from a ‘proto-La Tène’ to a discernibly mature La Tène style (Megaw and Megaw 2007). In brief, the genesis of Continental early Celtic art must now be regarded as having taken place in a number of disparate regions albeit all ultimately inspired by contact in varying degrees with the Italo-Greek world. While it might also be reasonable to ask just how did the progenitors of the first insular art reach Britain or Ireland, leaving aside the putative arrival of a ‘well-connected evangelist’ like some last refugee of invasion theory, it seems only logical to suggest that no single region can be regarded as the origin of such varying styles as that of the Ulster and Yorkshire sword-scabbards, the ‘Vegetal’ inspired pieces as found at Fiskerton and the surely later ‘Torrs-Witham group’. But we can offer few more certain answers than we did when we addressed this topic more than a decade ago (Megaw and Megaw 1993). As noted above, to those we have already listed we may add a ‘bent ring’ of LT Ic type and the hollow bronze ring from Kirkburn grave K6, East Yorkshire, a type commonly though not exclusively associated with LT II/C sword graves (Raftery 1988, Group 1; Stead 1991, 93–6 and fig. 69:3). But we are still unconvinced that there is any single piece or, more importantly, group of Continental imports on which to establish a firm basis for a new regional art style, notwithstanding that this is a style, or again rather a series of sub-styles, which must have depended on Continental progenitors. However, if one considers later evidence, such as first century insular pieces found on the Continent (see most recently Demarez and Leman-Delerive 2001), these also seem a quite disproportionately small number given the clear evidence for cross-Channel movements in the later Iron Age.

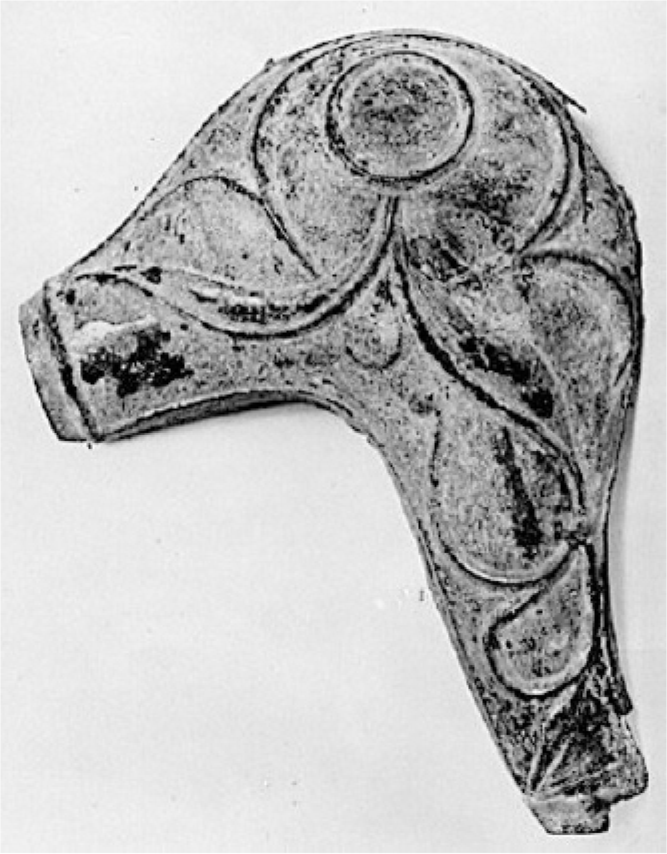


Figure 3.12a. Castiglione delle Stiviere, Mantua. Bronze sheet mount. Max. surviving length 178mm. Photo: E. Neuffer coll., Römisch-Germanishe Kommission, Frankfurt

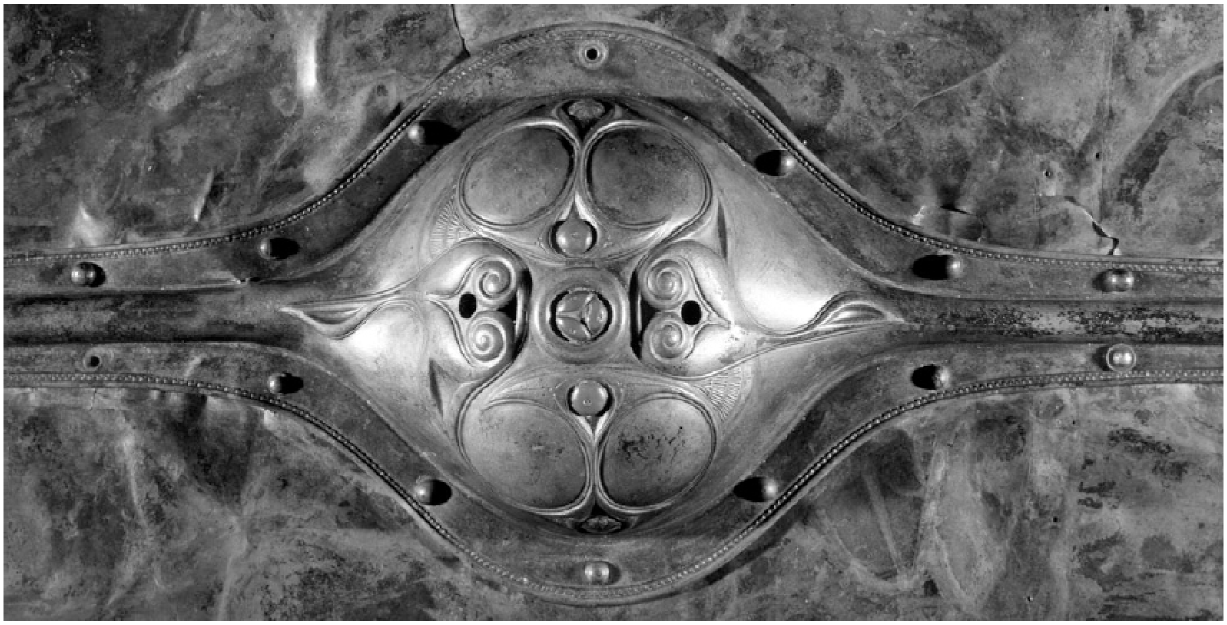


Figure 3.12b. Witham, Lincolnshire. Detail of bronze shield with coral inlay. Total length of shield 113cm. © Copyright the Trustees of The British Museum. Reproduced in colour on page 221

Certainly we can with some confidence continue to suggest that the beginning of a fully insular style did not occur before the earlier third century BC and that this was preceded by a phase of experimentation represented by the earliest material we have identified here. Whatever was going on at Fiskerton this included the importation of Continental-sourced metal as well as coral (Field and Parker Pearson 2003. 178) – the 'Vegetal' inspired pieces may have been made not much if at all earlier than this date. Another area which we will not pursue further here is to what degree one can demonstrate a common visual vocabulary extending across Europe to be translated into insular forms – a comparison of Jacobsthal's patterns (Jacobsthal 1944, pls. 261–79) and Jope's 'anatomy of insular Early Celtic art ornament' (Jope 2000, pls. I–XII) pattern books offer starting points.

Coinage apart, there are some other tantalising pieces of evidence. Having regard to technology as an indicator of connections across the North Sea, we may mention chain mail. This seems to be a Celtic invention, the earliest examples of which occur in the Carpathian Basin but with a sparse but significant distribution right across the map of Europe which one can see at Kirkburn grave K5, (Stead 1991, 54–6 and fig. 45), or in the well-known La Tène B2 or C1 warrior's grave of Ciumeşti, Satu Mare county in northwest Romania (see most recently Rustoiu 2006, esp. 49–52) or in a grave at Fluitenberg in the northern Dutch province of Drenthe; all three must be considered more or less contemporary, that is, in the earlier third century BC (van der Sanden 2005).

We have suggested here that looking at *general* similarities is not enough; one last illustration may suffice to underline the pit-falls which await claims of stylistic affiliations. Jacobsthal (1944, no. 98) drew attention to the fragmentary bronzes discovered in 1914 in a grave at Castiglione delle Stiviere (Mantua). Closely dated to LT C2 (mid-third century BC) thanks to the associated Classical material and more recently exhaustively studied by Raffaele De Marinis (1997, esp. 130–5 and fig. 12–15), these intriguing finds which included what Jacobsthal described as an *askos* (Figure 3.12a) have been claimed both by ourselves and De

Marinis as parts of a *carnyx* or war-horn. More recently and persuasively Fraser Hunter has argued that these are not parts of a musical instrument but rather of some kind of standard (Hunter 2001). More significant however for our present purposes, Jope, in one of a number of previously published sketches for his posthumous work, draw attention to what he termed ‘the sharp arrises, angular ribs and V-valleys’ of both Castiglione and the Witham and Wandsworth ‘long’ shield mounts (Figure 3.12b) suggesting that the insular shields offered not only their form but their technique to workshops south of the Alps (Jope 1978, 32; see also 2000, pls. 74–5). Not only is there a total lack of concrete proof for any such long-range north-south stylistic links but it is difficult to support the connections advanced both by Jacobsthal and Jope between the Italian find and Central European pieces of the former’s all-too-loosely designated ‘Plastic’ style – or, once more, sub-styles (for a selection of the latter see Megaw and Megaw 2001, il. 208–27). As in the later, post-Roman flowering of Celtic art, one can distinguish some general stylistic denominators; it is much more difficult to argue for closer associations (Megaw and Megaw 2001b). Still, it must be admitted that the local material from Castiglione delle Stiviere does exhibit more than a general relationship with our insular pieces to such an extent that we have previously written: ‘one could just as well suggest that this was a British export, as claim as has been done on the strength of this piece, that Italy south of the Alps was the immediate source of inspiration for the Torrs-Witham group!’ (Megaw and Megaw 2001, 198).

Certainly, one should not underestimate the difficulties facing the student of early Celtic art whether on the Continent or – even more so – in Britain and Ireland. Reading a recent article addressing the problems facing the Classical archaeologist concerned to identify common ‘workshops’ or ‘hands’ both through minute examination of the finished products and of the actual workshops themselves (Heilmeyer 2004), one is made all too aware of the enormity of the task facing the poor prehistorian of art.

Research into early Celtic art over the last half-century since the death of Paul Jacobsthal has clearly demonstrated what one might expect – that there are a number of distinct regions of which Britain and Ireland are part. While one cannot claim that Britain (or Ireland) helped participate in the genesis of Celtic art *as a whole*, it certainly has its own unique contribution to make, a contribution which extends over more than a millennium (Megaw and Megaw 2001b). That there are marked common features which over-arch regional cultural groupings we continue to believe is due to the art forms containing elements which 'represent a form of symbolic visual communication' (Megaw and Megaw 2001a, 19).

Since we began with a definitional quotation let us close with another, this time from Rudolf Echt's magisterial publication of the rich early La Tène woman's grave of Gersheim-Reinheim, Saarpfalz-Kreis. Very much more than the long-awaited full report of just the sort of early élite burial which is so noticeably absent from the insular record, Echt both offers us the best analysis we know of the true nature of the material with which we are dealing and also suggests how one should approach its study.

Here, in translation, is what he has written:

> 'Each work of art is at one and the same time …something manufactured, created form and communicated message. Therefore a concept of style which does justice to a work of art must combine material observations, semantic and aesthetic aspects in equal parts. In the case of La Tène art, this demand has until now been realized only in isolated attempts to deal with isolated groups of material. A basic necessity is a re-evaluation of the entire corpus of material based on a structuralist concept of style. Only when this pre-condition has been achieved will one be able to observe just how many chronological, regional and interrelated styles are contained in that artistic multiplicity which is usually designated, in an inadmissible short-hand, as La Tène style.' (Echt 1999, 255)

Structuralism apart, a challenge indeed and no less for students of insular than of continental Celtic art – or whatever we should call it.

Note

In the interim since the Oxford workshop inevitably a number of publications have appeared which it has not been possible to take account of here, notably the collection edited by Haselgrove and Moore (2007) which contains several interesting regional studies (see particularly Macdonald 2007) but is largely silent on links, perceived or actual, between Continental and Insular art.

Acknowledgements

There is little of our own in the present paper. Our debt to our teacher, the late Stuart Piggott and to a kindly critic, the late Martyn Jope, endures as it does to those still with us, notably Otto-Herman Frey, Barry Raftery,

Mansel Spratling, and especially to Ian Stead, all of whom would have written a much better paper.

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4

Seeing red: the aesthetics of martial objects in the British and Irish Iron Age

Melanie Giles

Introduction

As the iron blade sliced into the back of his skull for the first of several blows, it is doubtful whether the young man from Acklam Wold had any time to observe in detail the sword which ended his life (Dent 1983). It may have been drawn from a marvellously inscribed scabbard, or from behind a dazzling bronze shield, but in the moment of violence itself, such aesthetic effects were secondary to the strength of the blade and the intentions of the person who wielded it.

Perhaps this is why archaeologists have tended to divorce the study of Iron Age violence and warfare from Celtic art: we have focused on the technology of weapons, and the injuries they could have inflicted, or else we have analysed decorative embellishment in terms of date and stylistic affiliations (Macdonald 2007). Yet as Spratling suggests (this volume), much of Iron Age art would have been invisible until you were within ‘sword range’. Since the decoration on most martial objects would only be visible close-up, I would argue that we must seek an understanding of it from such a perspective. The central contention of this paper is that the *appearance* of such weapons was integral to their effectiveness.

I therefore argue that we cannot wrest art away from the objects of which it is an integral part, nor can we divorce it from the contexts in which such objects were used. Art is discussed here as part of a ‘technology of enchantment’ (Gell 1992) through which objects were designed to achieve certain effects upon both user and viewer. Placing emphasis upon the *effect* of an object shifts the focus of archaeological enquiry from typology to phenomenology: the experience of encountering these artefacts, and their impact on the senses of sight, sound and touch.

The paper begins by discussing this new approach to Celtic art, and introduces a range of later prehistoric objects which can broadly be described as ‘martial’. In order to gain a nuanced understanding of the resonances and meanings of such objects, the study focuses first upon examples of weaponry drawn from later prehistoric East Yorkshire, set within the broader context of Iron Age Britain and Ireland. It then evaluates the evidence for violence amongst these communities, as represented in the funerary record. The paper argues that the power of such artefacts was related to the knowledge people had of them, derived from other social and political contexts. Such events and encounters are further explored through the lens of two other powerful objects: the chariot and the mirror. Finally, the paper explores the meaning of colour within Celtic art, by analysing its use across the range of martial objects evaluated here.

The agency of art

The anthropologist Gell argued that art could be thought of as a special form of technology, designed to secure the attention of the viewer, and their acquiescence within a network of relations and intentions, in which they had become enmeshed (1992, 43). It can therefore be conceived of as a skilled way of engaging or drawing-in the viewer to specific ends. Such art, Gell proposed, is characterised by its extraordinary complexity, which emits what he called a ‘halo effect’ of power (1992, 46). The viewer cannot follow all the steps in the crafting performance which ‘congeal’ in the final artefact and is thus confused, dazzled and beguiled, or even frightened by its appearance. Developing Gell’s idea of this ‘technology of enchantment’ (1998, 74), Thomas has described how such awe-inspiring and ‘barely comprehensible virtuosity’ embodied in such objects is inexplicable, except through magical or ancestral intervention in the crafting process (1998, viii). This is important, since such objects may well have been thought to embody the supernatural power which assisted in their making (cf. Giles 2007b).

Objects are not simply imbued with power through decoration with complex designs: there would have been historically specific ‘ways of seeing’ *and* being affected by art (Gell 1998, 2, cf. Berger 1972). Ingold has therefore argued for the importance of the ‘education of attention’ in vision, as well as smell and touch (Gibson cited in Ingold 2000, 22). Through particular events, experiences and encounters, people learned how to look and listen. They were inculcated into the subtle relations between things: the meanings of particular colours or substances for example. Through this process, broader truths about the world – and the relationships of people to it – were gradually revealed. I would suggest that the purpose of a new approach to Celtic art is not to try and understand its real *meanings* (which will always elude us, since they will vary with context, Megaw 1985) but to analyse *how* such art effectively captured the attention of its viewers and educated them into particular ways of seeing the world.

Gell was careful to note that whilst art could therefore be described as having a form of agency, objects did not achieve this by themselves: such agency arose through the field of expectations, perceptions and understandings of the viewer (Thomas 1998, viii). The agency of decorated objects is therefore a property of the relationship between people and things, drawing on what they have seen before and where, as well as an intimate knowledge of the object’s history or biography, as Kopytoff has described it (1986). Like humans, object identities are garnered from their birth or crafting, life and circulation, and death or deposition. A lineage may be suggested by their affiliations to other objects which have inspired them or which they emulate. It may also be drawn from their association with older objects to which they become enjoined, as part of a repaired item, set or assemblage. A simple linear biography may not be appropriate however, for some objects: Joy suggests that evidence for the recycling of bronze mirrors means that these previous lives would also have been significant (Giles and Joy 2007).

Artefacts are therefore always enmeshed in social relations that stretch across space (through being gifted and exchanged) and across time (by being inherited and bequeathed). Aspects such as hue, patina and matter, may be used to evoke qualities of the people with which they were associated. In Hoskins’ words, objects can be used to tell the stories of people’s lives, as embodiments of, or extensions to, the self (1998). We acknowledge that our identity is itself constituted through this messy, material alliance with things: the ‘sociotechnical imbroglios’, or amalgam of human and non-human collectives, who constitute each other (Latour

1993, 141). Once such relationships have been forged, age and gender, experience and skill may be seen to literally inhere in the physical substance of things (Gell 1998, 231). Traces of sweat, wear, embellishment and mending become marks of the human affiliations they have enabled, and mnemonics of the events in which they played a role.

For example, the Kirkburn scabbard was repaired several times (Stead 1991, 68) which may suggest a longer ‘life-use’ than similar swords in the Wetwang Slack burials (Hill, pers. comm.). If so, it may have been seen as an ‘elder’ object, recalling past people and things, long gone. One of the terrets from the horsegear associated with the Wetwang Village chariot burial found in 2001, had also been repaired, using slivers of red ‘enamel’, after the loss of a coral stud (Hill 2001). The wheels of the Ferry Fryston chariot were not an original pair, being made from different sources of iron, with distinct patterns of wear (Boyle 2004). This may also have been the case with the Kirkburn chariot burial, where wheel 1 was noticeably more worn, with distinctive flanges (Stead 1991, 42). Meanwhile, Spratling (this volume) notes that the terrets from this latter chariot burial were not a matching set, comprising individual objects with differing numbers of moulded ‘lips’. In sum, these vehicles and their associated horsegear sometimes appear to have been assembled out of parts which already had complex histories of use that could be ‘read’ from such oddities and repairs. This association between people and things may have been so strong that it determined appropriate ‘deaths’ for objects (cf. Hunter, this volume). The sword buried with the butchered body of the young man from Acklam, for example, was bent double (Dent 1983, see Figure 4.2), as if its life had been ended in parallel with the deceased.

How does this mutual constitution of people and things happen? Objects can be thought of as making demands upon people: their size, form, texture and weight clearly affect how they are held, worn or wielded. Clark describes this as a process of ‘scaffolding’ through which our mind becomes framed by the props we use, to the extent that they transform our ways of thinking and acting (1997, 68). He therefore describes these props as ‘partners’ in both cognition and agency (1997, 46). Bourdieu uses two concepts to describe the results of this process: ‘hexis’ being the habituated postures which people tend to adopt (1977, 214), whilst ‘habitus’ is used to capture how the body becomes disposed towards certain principles of practice and strategies of action (1977, 78). The relevance of this theoretical approach is that it encourages us to consider the ways in which later prehistoric objects not only influenced ways of seeing but thinking about the world, and moulded both figure and gesture: creating historically specific kinds of bodies, and embodied strategies.

Rarely, we gain a glimpse into such matters from later prehistoric examples of figurative art. In East Yorkshire, a series of chalk figurines have been found in late Iron Age and early Romano-British contexts, which present a particular notion of these corporeal aesthetics (Figure 4.1). These objects, which are deposited largely in the re-cut ditches of ladder or droveway enclosures, probably date between the C1st BC and C1st AD (Stead 1988). The most common aspect of decoration is that of clothing: collars, hems and belts, which are sometimes incised with delicate detail, reminiscent of the textures and weaves preserved in mineralised textiles from middle-late Iron Age graves (Crowfoot in Stead 1991, 120). However, incised on the side or back of around a third of these figurines is a sword: sometimes depicted in its scabbard in full relief, or else alluded to through a flaring hilt. In all but two cases, it runs along the back of the figure (Stead 2006, 63). Stead suggested from both the position of such swords in graves and the location of suspension rings, that this may indicate how most of these weapons were worn in the middle-late Iron Age period, in the Yorkshire Wolds (ibid. 61). It may have given rise to an exaggerated swagger or straight-backed stance, to keep the heavy sword and scabbard in place, and suggests many were seen only fully from behind. Whilst ensuring it did not encumber someone’s gait, such a carrying position may also have had a metaphorical resonance, with the sword being seen as the ‘backbone’ of the community or upright pride and strength of an individual. Where further bodily details are inscribed on the figurines, the left hand is open across the chest, as if in a show of greeting, but the right is twisted behind or reaches over the shoulder to touch the hilt or blade of the sword. The figurines therefore embody a dual posture of open-handedness, welcome and hospitality, whilst also being ready to draw and defend (Giles 2007a). Whilst armed, these are not figures depicted in the midst of battle or act of victory, but the moment of reception and encounter. Whether they are idols from household shrines, figures involved in sympathetic magic rituals or children’s toys, they urge us to consider the role of objects as partners in the constitution of later prehistoric identity, and to re-embed Iron Age weaponry in the many different arenas of social exchange in which they were worn and displayed.

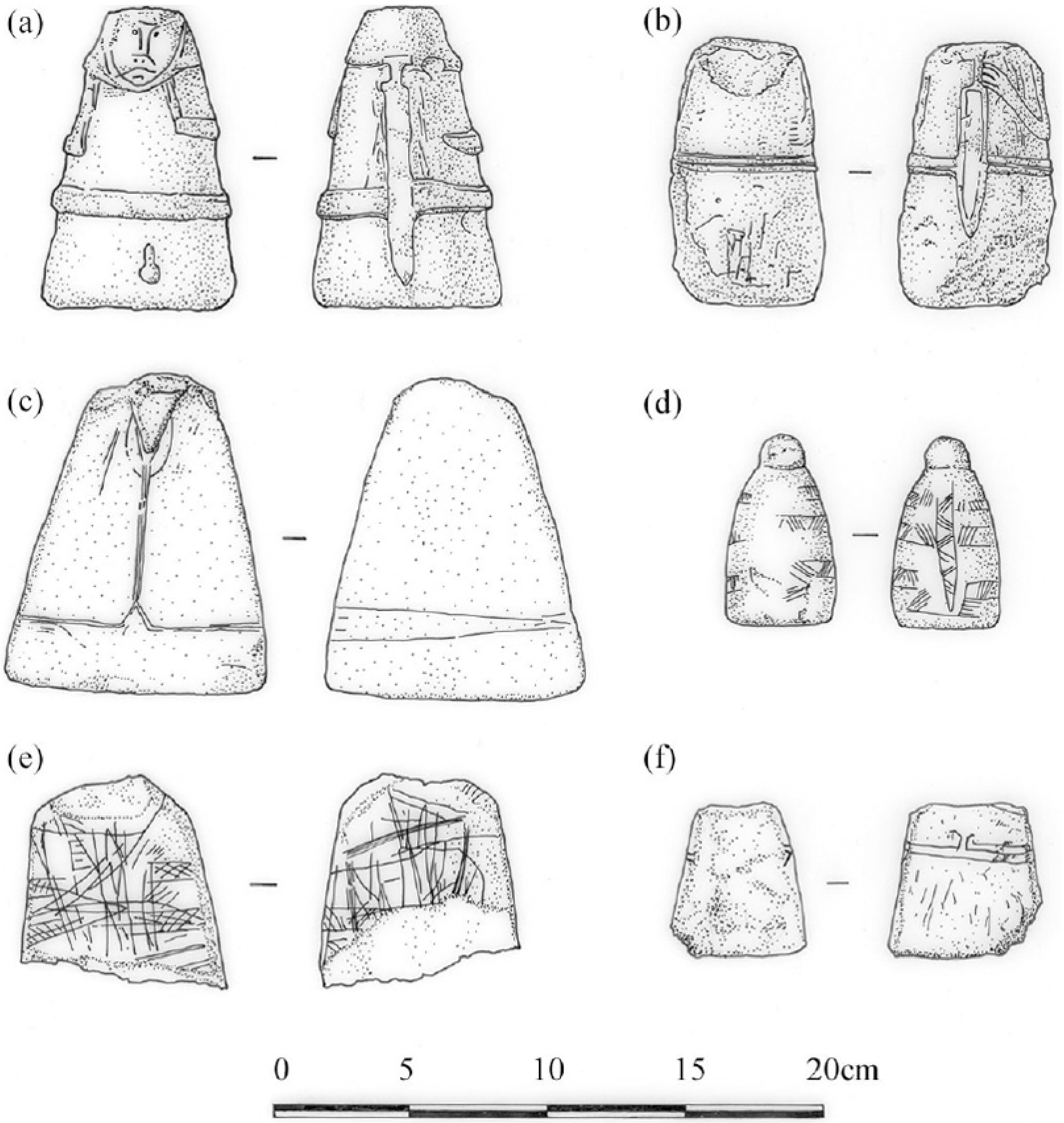

Figure 4.1. Late Iron Age Chalk figurines from East Yorkshire (a. Withernsea, b. *Garton Slack, c. Fimber, d. Malton, e. Garton Slack and f. Wharram Grange Crossroads: based on Stead 1988: figures 1, 4 and 9, Brewster 1980: figure 76 and author's additions)*

Martial objects in the Iron Age

Objects linked to martial activity in later prehistoric Britain include chariots or carts with their associated horse-gear as well as weapons, but objects of regalia and rare, personal artefacts such as mirrors and boxes, may also have been deployed in displays of power. First, I will consider the character of weaponry from the region of East Yorkshire, dating to the mid-late Iron Age period (Figure 4.2). Such objects are generally rare – as are any grave goods, since most inhumations were unaccompanied (Dent 1984). Most weapons therefore appear to have been interred with the deceased, perhaps as personal possessions but more probably, as offerings or gifts (Brewster 1980, Dent 1984, Stead 1965, 1979 and 1991). Rarely, they have also been found embedded in the body of an individual (Stead 1991).

The basic weapon appears to have been a spear, made of an iron head and wooden shaft. Many of the graves associated with spears also contain mineralised traces of wooden shields made of maple, cherry, alder or lime (Stead 1991, 61–3), covered in fleece or skin products (like leather) to help prevent splitting. In the Great Wolds Valley cemeteries, bone points were recovered in three graves which also contained iron spearheads, and were thus interpreted as ‘missile points’ (R146, R174 and GS5 in Stead 1991, 78; here, individual burials are referred to by site code and number, followed by the monograph reference from which they derive). At Grimthorpe, thirteen such ‘lance-heads’ were similarly found in association with a broken iron spearhead (Mortimer 1905, 151). However, such implements may have had multiple uses and roles (Field and Rylatt, pers. comm.)

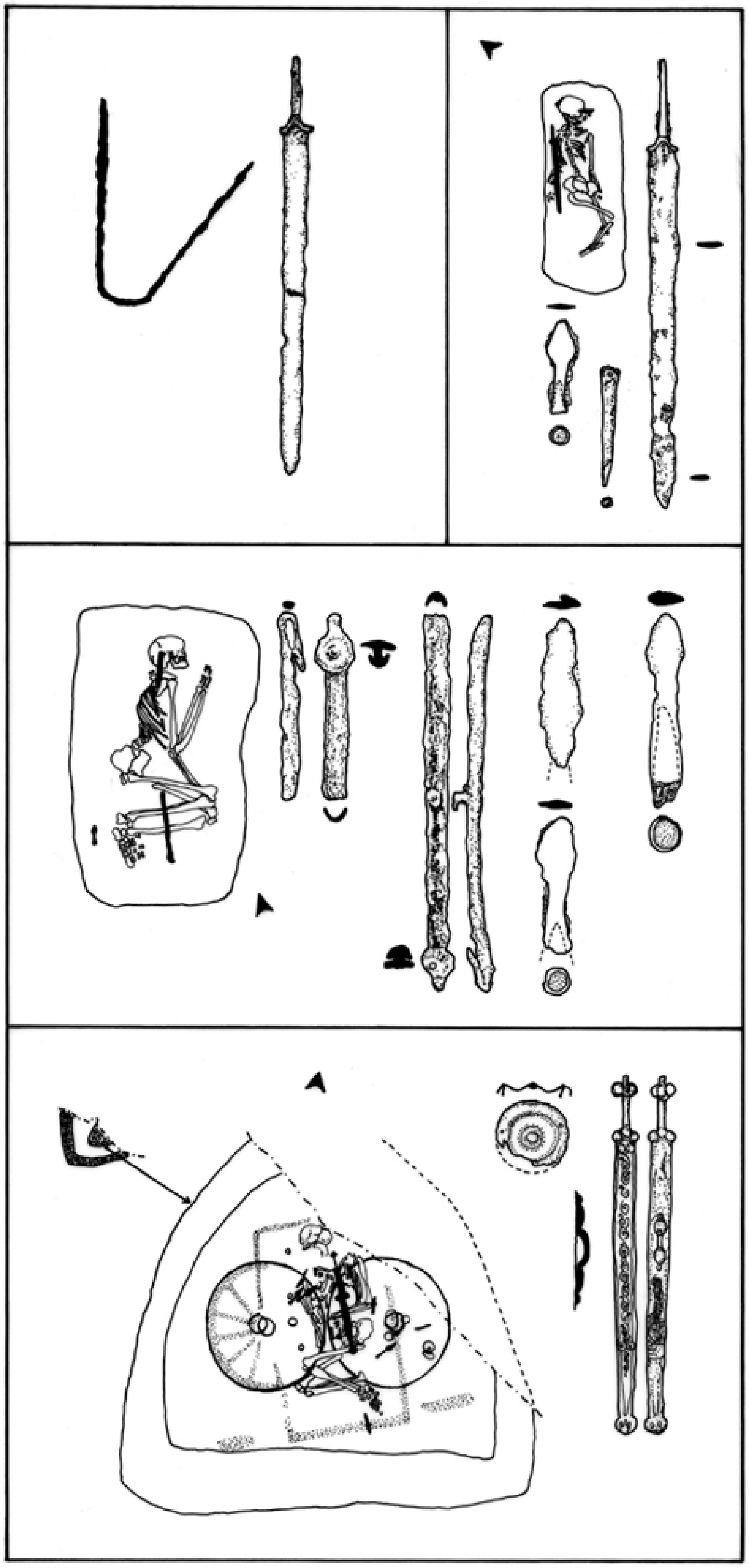

Figure 4.2. Weapons from square barrow and chariot burials on the Yorkshire Wolds, based on: top left: *sword from Acklam, Dent 1983, figure 1 c and d;* top right: *sword, spearhead and bone point, Stead 1991, figure 111, R146;* middle: *spearhead and shield fittings, Stead 1991, figure 121 GS4;* bottom: *cart burial with sword, Dent 1985, figure 2 and Stead 2006, figure 88*

A spear and wooden shield therefore probably represented the most common 'weapons set' used in these communities. The shields were occasionally decorated with iron bosses and spine bindings (e.g. R148, R163 and GS4, Stead 1991), or more rarely, with bronze disc ornaments (as at Grimthorpe, Figures 2 and 4, Mortimer 1905, frontispiece). Whilst a variety of small iron blades including two daggers have also been found (e.g. R45, R50, BF63 and R141, Stead 1991, 80), it is the iron swords which comprise one of the most impressive categories of martial objects. Varying from campanulate to straight forms, they are usually composite artefacts, with pommels made from horn, antler or wood, sometimes ornamented with copper-alloy discs (e.g. R24, Stead 1991, 64–71). Most of the scabbards in which these were sheathed were made of wood covered in skin products, sometimes finished with fleece (e.g. R24, R144 and R107, Stead 1991, 71–4). However, there are a handful of much more elaborate scabbards where bronze and iron were used together, to spectacular effect. The blade and backplates are commonly of iron, but the frontplates of the swords from Kirkburn, Wetwang Slack and Bugthorpe are made of bronze. The designs on these northern scabbards are classified by Stead as Group E: comprising decorative motifs of Stage IV: half-palmette and wave patterns with a range of 'filler' motifs (2006, 15).

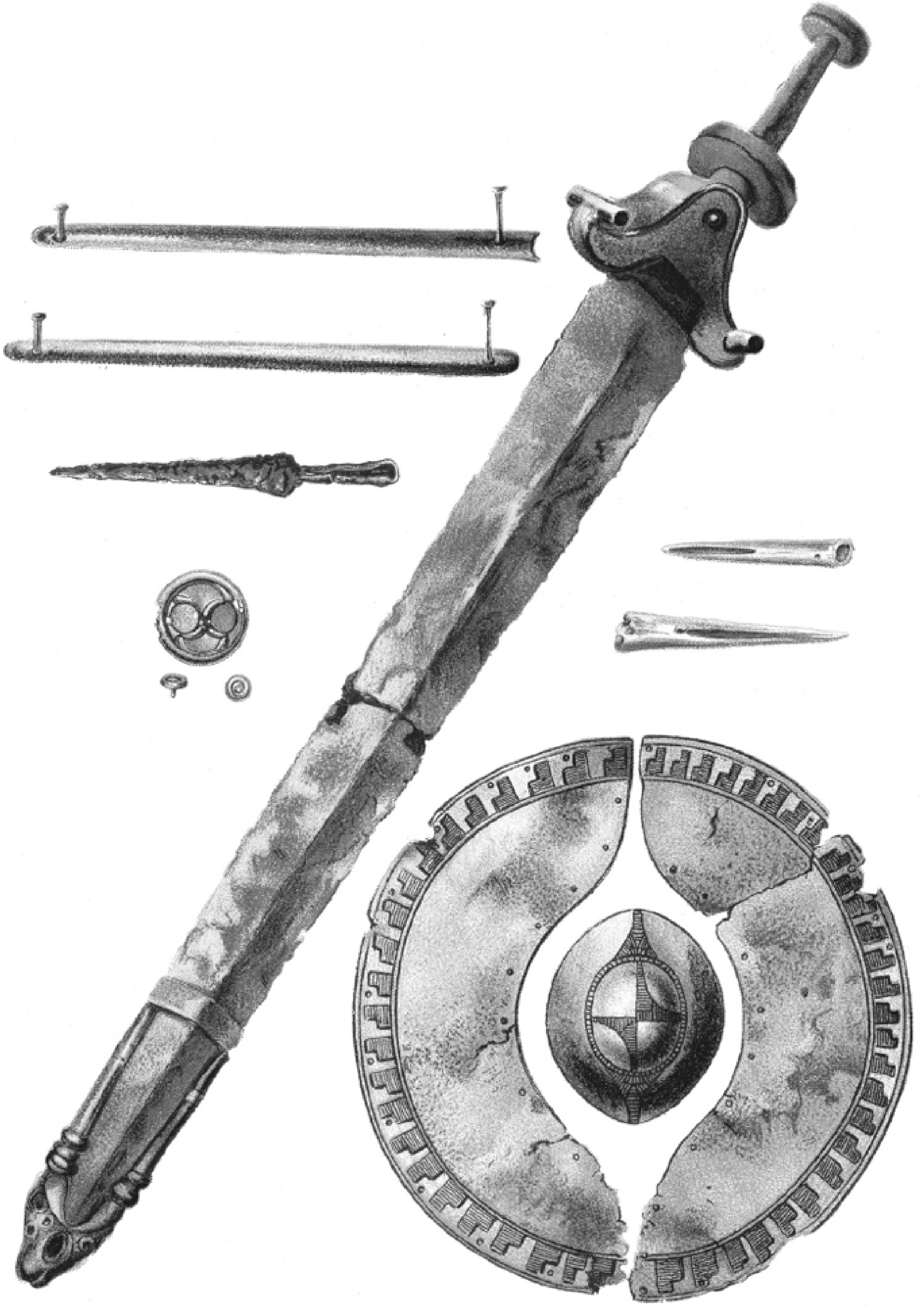

Figure 4.3. Sword, shield fittings and bone points from burial at Grimthorpe (from Mortimer 1905: frontispiece)

For example, the Kirkburn sword is decorated on its hilt with cut-back panels infilled with red ‘enamel’ (more correctly known as hot glass work), in a range of bar, roundel, triangle and crescent designs (Figure 4.3, Stead 1991, 66–70 and 2006, 184–5). The scabbard is inscribed with scrolls of tendrils/petals, set against hatched or stippled backgrounds, enriched with zig-zags and wavy lines (ibid.). The grip of the sword from Wetwang Slack cart burial 1 and the pommel of the sword from Wetwang Slack cart burial 2 are also keyed for red hot glass work (Stead 2006, 185–6). The former scabbard is decorated with wave tendrils spiralling alternately from left to right, whilst the latter is incised with reverse ‘s’ shapes, ending in spirals facing a cusp. Stead considers the affinities between these objects to be so strong that they must have been made within a generation of each other, perhaps in the same workshop (2006, 118). The Bugthorpe scabbard is also decorated with wave tendril designs, forming birds’ heads and beaks (Stead 2006, 186–7), whereas the chape of the Grimthorpe sword is fishshaped, originally set with coral stud eyes (Figure 4.4, Mortimer 1869, 181 and Stead 2006, 187). Interestingly, the colour red dominates decoration of these objects: only in the Grimthorpe and Thorpe Hall hilts is yellow hot glass work used in alternating bands with red. Standing apart from this series of weapons is the anthropoid hilt from North Grimston (Mortimer 1905, 354–7 and Stead 2006, 196–7): its combed or dread-locked hair pulled back from a narrow face, oval eyes and down-turned mouth.

The metal scabbards would have been impressive from a distance, glimpsed as a flash of reflected light, but for those permitted a close-up view, the intricacies of their design would have been revealed. The organic scabbards may have achieved a similarly impressive effect through contrasting panels of light and dark wood (Hill, pers. comm.). In both, shadows cast by the depth of cut-back or raised ornamentation would have enhanced their appearance (ibid.) It suggests that objects were designed in mind of subtle and contrasting ‘fields of visibility’, which shifted with the intimacy of different encounters (D. Mattingly, pers. comm.).

In her analysis of martial implements from Iron Age Britain, Green has argued that some examples of weapons from Britain deliberately employed animal symbolism which conveyed qualities of ferocity and aggression (1996, 94). Examples include the original boar on the Witham shield, the snouted Deskford carnyx, and the ‘dragon pairs’ found late on Iron Age scabbards from the south-east. Fitzpatrick has argued that the very shape of rectangular shields represents an animal hide with four splayed legs, protected by shaped copper alloy bindings (2007, 343). Yet many decorated objects also used images of birds, suggesting a complex world of animal symbolism. The skill with which ‘fantastic’ serpentine, winged and clawed animals on other shields were brought to life may have been part of the way in which their qualities or capacities were captured within the artefact, to be taken on and embodied in the actions of those that wielded them (see Dickenson’s work on Anglo-Saxon designs, 2005). Fitzpatrick notes the hands of the bearer would have been shielded by, or touching these beasts, ‘transferring something of their essence to mortal men’ (2007, 353). Yet the East Yorkshire artwork is subtly different: most of the artwork is deliberately ambiguous, combining abstract forms with references to natural phenomena – vegetal, as well as faunal and avian. It is possible that this artwork alludes to powers of shape-shifting or transmutation, as Green suggests (1996, 137) but this character of art has another, very powerful effect.

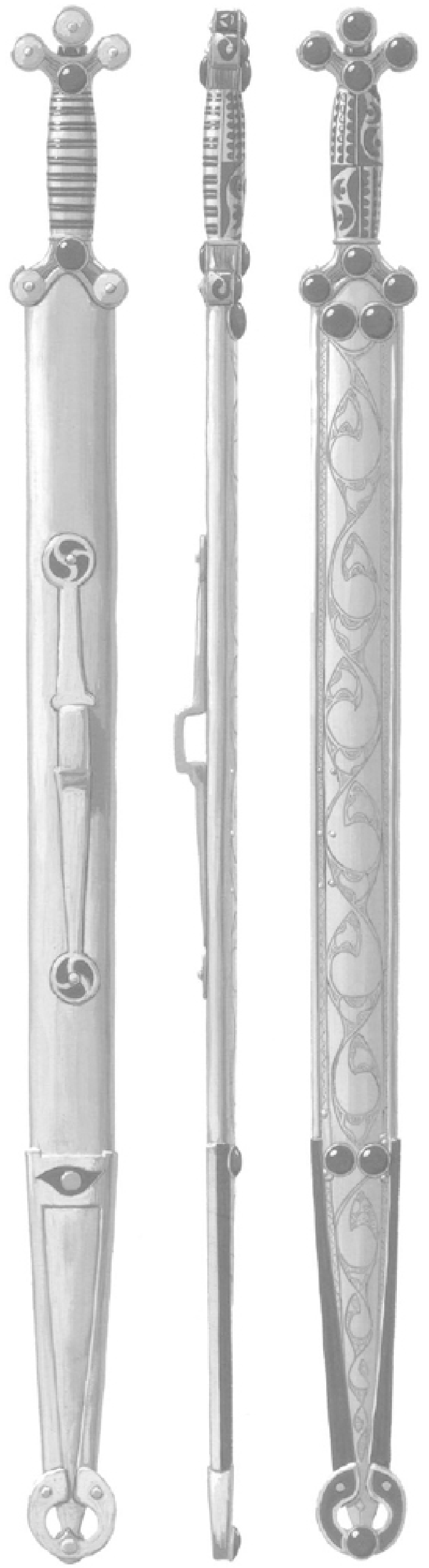

Figure 4.4. Reconstruction of the Kirkburn sword and scabbard by Simon James (reproduced by the kind permission of the illustrator). Reproduced in colour on page 222

The complexity and dexterity of designs and interlocking pattern dazzles the eye with a contrastive range of decoration and voids, or raised and depressed zones. Reflections and shadows glimmer and are transposed. Without an obvious beginning or end, such art becomes a maze which cannot be visually navigated, disorientating the spectator and capturing them in what Gell has called a ‘mind-trap’ (1996, 80). To understand the significance of employing such designs on artefacts used to defend the human body or wound another, we must next explore the nature of violence within these communities.

Violence in later prehistoric East Yorkshire

James has recently argued against the ‘pacification of the past’, that has accompanied accounts which present the later prehistory of Britain in a more egalitarian light (2007). Such models have deliberately sought to redress stereotypes of warfare-obsessed Celtic elites, motivated by increasing population pressure and competition for resources (cf. Cunliffe 1995, fig. 41). However, they can be criticised for their lack of overt consideration of violence. By focusing instead on themes such as ceremony and exchange, they have ignored acts of ‘negative’ reciprocity which were also integral to the social life of these communities. The anthropology of agro-pastoralists suggests that violence did indeed have an important role to play, in terms of mediating conflict, prestige and honour (see below).

The extensive excavation of square barrow cemeteries in the Yorkshire Wolds provides a unique opportunity to view the scale of violence which was prevalent amongst one region’s population, between the middle and later Iron Age. A synthesis of the reliable osteoarchaeological analysis from the cemeteries of Wetwang and Garton Slack (Dent forthcoming and Brewster 1980, respectively), Rudston, Burton Fleming, Kirkburn and Garton Station (Stead 1991) and Cowlam (Stead 1986), suggests that only thirty-four individuals bore evidence of injuries which might have been sustained in violent events, from a total population of eight hundred and fourteen burials. Three were buried with spearheads still intact in the body, suggesting mortal wounds (R94, R140 and R152a, Stead 1991), seven had fractures of the left or right clavicle, suggesting they were wounded in combat, perhaps on their defensive side (R112, BF2, R43, R84, R192 in Stead 1991; WS13, Dent forthcoming; and GS4b, Brewster 1980). Others suffered from healed cuts to the face (R3, Stead 1991) or head (WS114, Dent forthcoming). One individual had evidence of a puncture wound in the skull, caused by a heavy blow which had also flattened one of the cervical vertebrae through compression (GS7, Stead 1991). Numerous other small fractures and soft tissue damage to limb bones, most of which showed signs of healing, may have been sustained either in fights, or accidents such as a kick from an animal (e.g. R132, Stead 1991). In addition there are two incidents of dislocated shoulders (WS22 and WS288, Dent forthcoming), to which can be added the latest female chariot burial from Wetwang Village (Hill 2002). Apart from Acklam Wold, sword injuries are rare.

The most common wounds appear to be sustained from spears thrust towards the upper right-hand side of the chest, as well as the back and pelvis: such blows being responsible for at least three deaths. Though other examples show evidence of healing, these wounds probably represent lethal intent between the combatants, as spears were slipped over or under the guard of the left-hand (probably holding a shield), towards the heart and lungs (contra Giles, cited in James 2007, 162). In addition, there are several blunt trauma blows to the face and skull, which may be the result of trips or falls, as well as more deliberate blows. All of these incidents however, suggest inter-personal violence on a small-scale: perhaps one-to-one duelling or vendetta, or involving small bands of young adults, almost exclusively male.

What we are seeing preserved in the skeletal evidence is the most extreme examples of ‘deep’ wounding which have either left a skeletal trace or resulted in the embedding of a weapon in the body, so that it could not be easily removed. Brawls and blows leading to soft-tissue damage, strangulation or indirect means of violence such as poisoning or burning, will not necessarily be reflected in this material. James points out that fighting with knives would have resulted in few fatalities but caused superficial and survivable wounds with impressive scars (pers. comm., Perdue 2000 and Walton, Blaisdell, Jordan and Bodai 1989). Such signs may well have been vital to people's social standing and reputation, providing visual mnemonics of their violent capacity and endurance. James therefore argues that there was a strong *ideological* importance of combat within later prehistory (2007, 162): its rarity may largely have been due to the effectiveness of armed deterrance and mutual fear.

The anthropology of violence in small-scale agro-pastoral communities suggests that it is often endemic, arising through contests over people, land and stock (Chadwick 2007, Giles 2007a and 2007c). Acts of trespass and appropriation (Osgood 2005), the unsanctioned use of water or pasture, raiding of herds and flocks, or the appropriation of rare raw materials, can all be prompts for retaliation (Ferguson 1990, Haas 2001). Even amongst communities with a strong egalitarian ethic, such violence can be seen as an appropriate way to 'level out' inequalities (Fukai 1996). Combat may also be a vital arena in which prestige and honour is gained, involving skill and daring, especially amongst key age-sets and gender groups (Baxter 1978, Heald 2000, Redmond 1994). It may be a way in which groups cemented their sense of identity and difference from others, but equally, violence could be a means of enhancing personal status and wealth (Abbink 2000). James argues that the chariot and sword burials of East Yorkshire might therefore represent the adoption of a martial ideology, as a means of marking internal class distinctions, within these communities (1999, 92).

Juridical as well as religious violence, including death-penalties and sacrifice, should also be considered in this discussion (James 2007, 168). Domestic violence, entwined with issues of gender and power, should similarly be part of our account (Arnold 1995). However, violence amongst small-scale communities most often arises through intensely felt injustices or injuries inflicted on kin or community: anger and revenge is therefore seen by Alès as an equally intense corollary to love and conviviality (2000, 148). As the obverse of the social obligation to repay a gift, such retribution is an essential part of a continuous flow of generosity, honour and violence (Thomas 2003, 300).

Actual bloodshed may be rare, since the consequences of death, such as blood-feuds, are devastating and long-lived: frequently becoming inter-generational (Maschner and Reedy-Maschner 1998). (Whilst incidents of violence appear infrequent in Iron Age East Yorkshire, recent re-analysis of skeletal material suggests that they were much more common in Iron

Age Dorset, Hill, pers. comm.). Inter-personal confrontation is therefore the final outcome of a series of stages designed to deflect or deter violence in potential enemies, which may include the trading of derogatory insults or taunts, symbolic combats such as sport and dance, the theft, raiding or damaging of property, and flaunting or intimidating displays of prowess and might. For the rhetoric of violence to work, however, weapons must occasionally be tested, whether this led to injuries or fatalities (James, pers. comm.) In all of these stages, material culture plays an important role, which is to incite awe and courage in one's own group, but terror and despair in the enemy. In his study of Oceanic martial implements and accoutrements, Thomas has used Gell's approach to describe how decorated clubs and shields commit a kind of psychological warfare on the viewer, demoralising them and deterring them from violence (1995). Effective weapons use design patterns that are perceived as visually dangerous, and may be drawn from ancestral or sacred repertoires of images. They therefore possess the power to 'win over' an enemy without physically wounding them, immobilising them in what Thomas calls a 'highly aestheticised terrorism' (1995, 97).

This violence may not have been directed solely at human enemies. It has long been noted that many of the Iron Age bronze shields or the sheet metal coverings of wooden examples were 'wafer-thin', and could not have withstood actual combat (Fitzpatrick 2007, 342). Examples include the Battersea and Witham shields, both found deposited in rivers. Such items are usually interpreted as symbolic representations of martial objects – symbols of power which could be deployed in acts of conspicuous consumption or votive deposition, as gifts offered to the gods or ancestors. Yet the form of combat they may have been designed to face was not necessarily human, but cosmological. Acts of deposition may also have been moments of confrontation and spiritual struggle, in places which were thresholds between worlds. Such 'supernatural warfare' may be the purpose for which some of these objects were designed.

If the concept of the agency of art is a useful way of approaching later prehistoric craft practice, we might now see the biography of one particular object from Ireland in a new light. In his study of Irish La Tène influenced art, Raftery noted that one of the scabbards from the River Bann, County Toome, was 'especially poor' in artistic quality and 'wholly incompetent in curvilinear ornament', despite the craftsperson being an accomplished engraver (1994, 164–5). There was no flow in the design, no ‘trap’ for the mind. Raftery suggests that a later owner turned the decorated side of the scabbard inwards, in disgust or embarrassment, leaving the unadorned face on view. What it may also suggest is that as a weapon, this implement had failed, because it could not intimidate the spectator, and ensnare them in its design.

In another work, Gell looked at the way in which bodies and their orifices can be protected by literally being ‘wrapped in images’ through body art (1993). Carr has argued that such tattooing or body decoration in later prehistory may have been more common than previously thought (2005), but it is also possible that the carrying and use of objects successfully decorated with Celtic art, were perceived as hostile and aggressive towards an enemy whilst conveying protection to the user. In common with Pauli, Gell himself interpreted Celtic art as ‘apotropaic’: literally protective against malign intentions, either human or supernatural (Gell 1998, Pauli 1975). The ‘knotwork’ ornament found in late Celtic art was used as an example of a complex design whose intricacy or sheer multiplicity acted as a form of ‘demonic fly-paper’ as Gell put it, within which evil forces became entranced and ensnared (1998, 84). Select, impressive objects such as scabbards, may therefore have been decorated with abstract La Tène designs, to achieve this effect.

Performance and power: embodied aesthetics

Martial weapons ‘worked’ on people because these individuals were predisposed to interpreting the art in a particular way: knowledge that was derived from seeing these implements in other social contexts, and appreciating the skill which went into their making. These events may have included moments of heightened tension, as well as day-to-day encounters but both settings remind us that art was closely allied to power (Doty 1998, 45). The previous section discussed how during combat, such objects may have been perceived to restrain or incite certain courses of action. During other social events, the wearing of such weapons or bearing of implements decorated with similar designs, drew on these defensive and powerful associations. The sealed sheet bronze canister from the female chariot burial at Wetwang Slack, for example, was decorated with the same style of art and red hot glass work, found on scabbards in the two neighbouring cart burials (Figure 4.5; Dent 1985). Jope suggests that this ‘empty’ vessel may once have held organic materials ‘such as beans or knobs of wood to give a modest rattle’ (2000, Volume 1, 249). If so, it would have audibly signalled the bearer’s arrival, as well as the presence of this mysterious and powerful box.

Such visual and aural effects may have helped set the tone for a difficult exchange or created a heightened atmosphere in meetings between rival groups. Ideally, events which involved gift-giving or hosting feasts remained one-sided: to instil both admiration and covetousness in the recipient *as well as* defeat, since they were forced to acknowledge the exchange could not be bested or reciprocated in kind. Ultimately, this art was a powerful part of an agent’s repertoire to ensure the success of such encounters, enhancing personal prestige as well as social renown. The following two examples discuss how this aesthetics of power was embodied in the union of people and things.

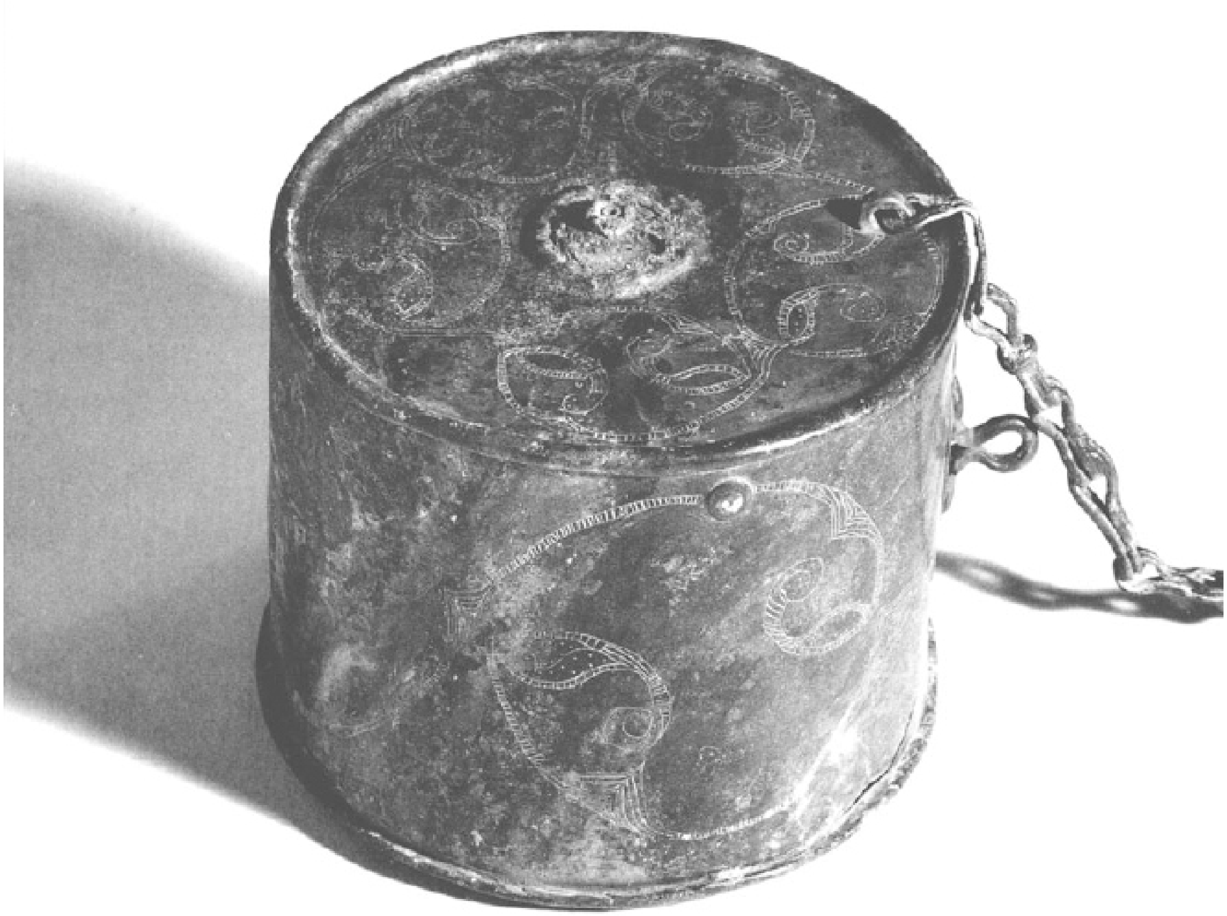

Figure 4.5. The sealed bronze canister from Wetwang Slack chariot burial 2 (reproduced from Stead 1996: figure 31. © Copyright the Trustees of The British Museum

The 'chariot'

One of Gell's main examples which evoked the agency of art was that of the highly decorated prows of canoes used in exchange visits by Trobriand Islanders (1998, 69). He argued that such vessels were used to pleasurably frustrate and demoralise the hosts with whom people had come to trade: using the carved and painted decoration to distract and captivate their intended audience. Disempowered, these hosts were prevented from making advantageous exchanges with their visitors. In other words, the art was not used to convey meaning (though individual designs were steeped in ancestral symbolism) but to 'project power' (Thomas 2003, 101). Such art is inherently social *and* political.

The Trobriand canoes provide a good analogy for the role and effect of the 'chariot' in Iron Age East Yorkshire. The term is problematic since it suggests an overtly martial role: in fact, these light, two-wheeled vehicles were more akin to a contemporary cart, pony-trap or buggy, and probably never travelled at great speed (Spence, pers. comm.). However, in a world defined by linear earthworks and trackways, by the surveillance and scrutiny of people's comings and goings (Giles 2007a and c), this object was literally and metaphorically a vehicle of relations. It did allow people to move more rapidly between communities, but perhaps more importantly, allowed *some* individuals to be driven, rather than to arrive on foot or horseback. The chariot enhanced the performance of such arrivals and departures, through the jangle of horse-gear, the gyration of wheels, thud of hooves, and gestures and orders of the driver. It framed them in relation to a driver, creating a specific decorum of holding the body when seated. Alternatively, it enabled them to show off feats of dexterity and prowess, whilst driving and turning the team. The vehicle also raised its occupants above the bodies of others – a use of physical elevation and distance to reproduce social standing and difference – giving them a psychological advantage in exchange or enhancing authority in disputes. The cart may have been used in violent raids or to deliver judicial punishments: at such times, the movement, sound and colour of its accoutrements may have 'thrilled and invigorated' the occupants, as with the Trobriand canoeists (Thomas 2003, 103). But it was not simply a weapon of warfare. At other times, it could have been a stage or platform for procession and ceremony, and in the funerary rite, it became first a bier and then a coffin, dramatically conveying its inhabitant to their last encounter and on into the afterlife.

All of these roles were achieved through a variety of visual and oral effects: by the turning sweep of the vehicle, its decoration with cast and inlaid terrets, snaffles, strap-unions and discs, and the twinned co-ordination of people and animals, enabled by batons or whips. Archaeologists are occasionally puzzled by the attention to detail shown in objects such as linch pins which could not have been properly seen in motion, but Gell's approach suggests that this blurred and bedazzling impact (even at low speeds) was an integral part of the vehicle's powerful effect. In addition, the cart occupied a particular field of audibility: projecting its arrival through sounds which may have been channelled down the narrow dry valleys of Wolds, long before it was actually seen. Cart, driver, ponies and gear became an inseparable amalgam of people, animals and things, producing an intimidating performance (cf. Thomas 2003, 103).

The mirror

The second object I want to use to illustrate this embodied aesthetics of power is the Iron Age mirror. Bronze examples from the later Iron Age were decorated with a variety of complex La Tène designs but those from the middle-late Iron Age of East Yorkshire were plain and made of iron, with rare bronze fittings (see Giles and Joy 2007). Both have traditionally been interpreted as objects of vanity, since they are commonly found in female graves, yet their presence in cart burials from Yorkshire suggests they were of equal importance to the swords, scabbards, boxes and horse-gear, found with adult males (compare Figure 4.2 and Figure 4.6). Again, if we shift the focus of our enquiry to a consideration of their *effect* upon people, a rather different role emerges.

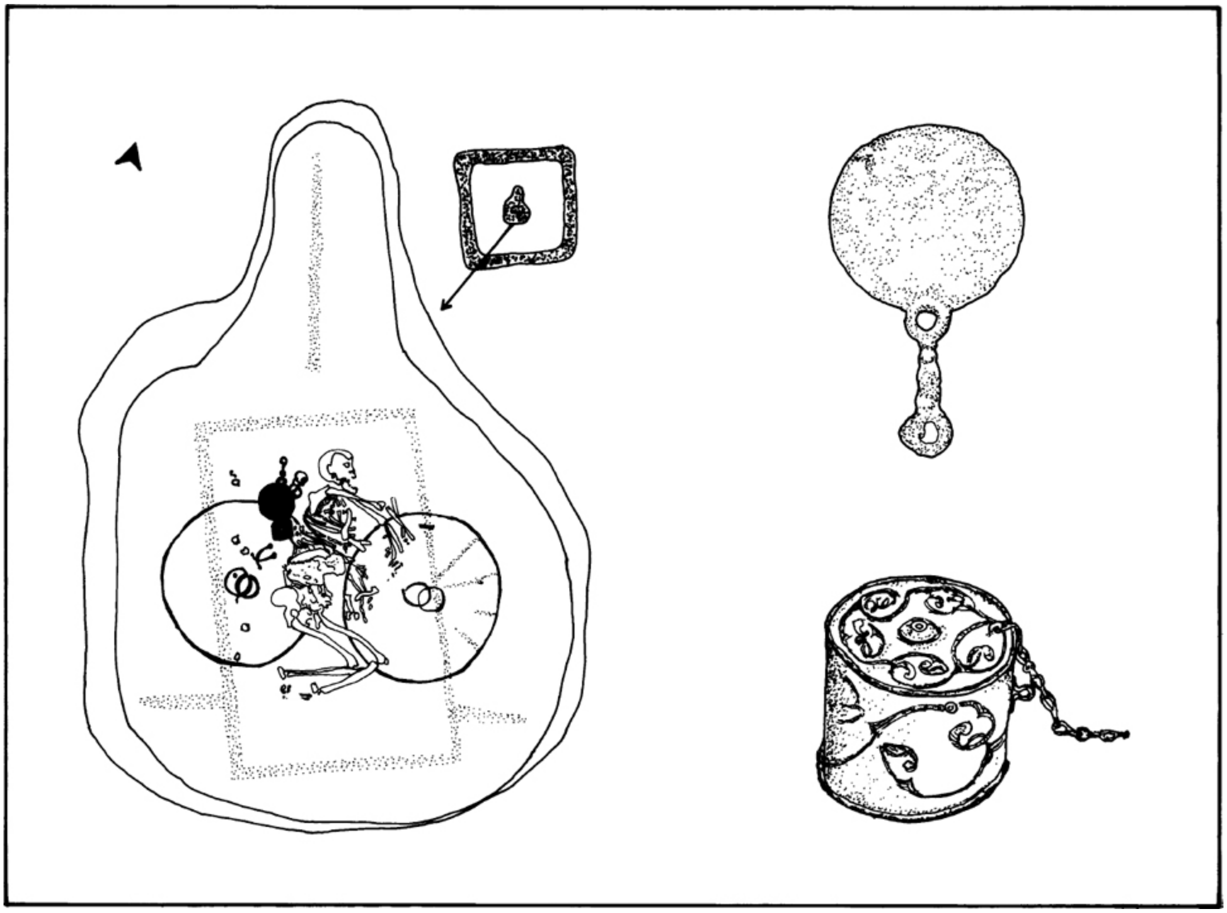

Figure 4.6. Wetwang Slack chariot burial 2, iron mirror and bronze canister (based on Dent 1985: figure 3 with author's additions)

At a distance, both bronze and iron mirrors would have been an impressive sight: catching and reflecting light. However, many of them appear to have been wrapped in cloth, or protected in fur bags – such concealment ironically drawing attention to what was being hidden (Taussig 1999). The moment of revelation would have been both awesome and perhaps frightening, since their polished and burnished discs would have reflected a shadowy world of warped images and distorted colour. Supernatural or cosmological power is often attributed to luminous objects (Morphy 1989), whose brilliance may be seen as tangible, vaporous evidence of this force. Gell describes such powerful objects as literally being 'contagious' to those who come into contact with them (1992, 46). In the case of the bronze mirrors decorated with La Tène 'Mirror' style art, this was achieved by the complex interplay of shapes, which Jope describes variously as teasingly interlaced, swaying, leering and crazed

(2000). Wrapping the mirror performed the apotropaic function of protecting these objects from vulnerable or uninitiated eyes, whilst containing the forces inherent within it.

What were those forces? Analogous examples from ethnography suggest that rather than being used as cosmetic items, mirrors play a key role as implements of catoptromancy: augery and prediction using reflective surfaces (see summary in Giles and Joy 2007: pools and lakes may also be used for such purposes). James and Rigby note that mirrors permit the viewer to see both ahead of and behind themselves at the same time (1997, 39). This property may well be the source of the belief they enable the viewer to look back into the past as well as into the future. Such objects are thought to operate at the liminal boundaries between worlds of the living and the dead, or the realms of the spirits. Other examples tell of mirrors used to heal and curse, spy on others, bind oaths and cast spells (Giles and Joy 2007, 26). As a result, these objects may also have been perceived as a kind of weapon: powerful and dangerous implements, used to awe, threaten and intimidate.

Where wear is evident, these heavy objects often appear to have been suspended upside-down from their looped handles, perhaps on a belt. The cumbersome disc and weight of the metal would have affected the gait of someone wearing them, and some could only have been held with both hands (perhaps by an attendant or officiator) for another person to gaze into (Giles and Joy 2007, 25). As an extension of the self, agent and object meshed in a memorable performance of not only social but sacred power.

'Seeing red': colour and power

The final aspect of Celtic art which I want to consider builds on this importance of an object's luminosity: this is the issue of colour. One of the main substances which could be used to achieve this was glass, either in the form of beads or small, flat plaques of hot glass work ('enamel'). Within East Yorkshire, glass bead necklaces were found exclusively with female burials, mainly senior adults, within the Wetwang Slack cemetery, as well as Cowlam and Arras (Giles 2000, 141). Some of these beads were an admixture of white and blue glass, and even this blue tint varied between deep opaque blue and a more translucent turquoise colour (see Stead 1996, fig. 47). It is therefore interesting that the fur bag which enclosed the Wetwang Village 2001 cart burial (again, an elderly female) appears to have been tied or decorated with strands of miniature blue glass beads (Hill 2001). Within this region, blue may have been a colour associated with female gender and maturity, and glass beads may have been acquired as women entered senior positions within their family and community, perhaps as heirlooms.

In contrast, red hot glass work was used on sword grips and pommels, as well as scabbards (see Figure 4.3), shield fittings, horse-gear and the sealed canister of the ‘Wetwang box’ (see Figure 4.5, Stead 1979, Dent 1985). Red coral *(Corallium rubrum)* was mainly used to decorate fibulae but also pins (such as the elaborate wheel-shape hair pin from Danes Graves in East Yorkshire), ear-rings, bracelets, plaques, beads and pendants as well as chariot fittings (Stead 1965). As noted above, when the coral stud was lost from one of the Wetwang Village terrets, it was replaced with slivers of red ‘enamel’ (Hill 2001). The ‘pendant’ plaque from the Queen’s barrow at Arras consists of a roundel of sandstone, smeared with a red dye or paste, and surrounded by rings of coral (Stead 1965, 64 and 1979, 84–5). Shell, amber, beads of reddy-brown sandstone, a clay paste enriched with haematite as red colourant, along with one example of a bead of red porphyry, were used to decorate brooches, pendants and bracelets (Stead 1979, 86–8). Fragments of local Wolds ‘red’ chalk (which itself contained small fossil corals, Wright and Wright 1942, 112), were also used.

The meanings and resonances of colour must be sought within the context of the world in which they were experienced: to seek out the affinities they share with other things (Jones and MacGregor 2002). Colours ‘condense’ meaning, Jones and Bradley have argued (1999), because their hue powerfully evokes fluids or substances (in the human body), seasons or times (by mimicking certain colours of light or vegetation) or even places (by prompting us to think of particular colours of soil or rocks). In the case of red, one of its key associations is with blood: Tilley argues this is not surprising, since we experience the world phenomenally *through* our bodies (1999). James has suggested that this association was vividly captured in the red hot glass work decoration of the Kikburn sword, as freshly-spilled blood soaking its handle and tip (pers. comm.). Red is commonly associated with particular states of being, such as anger and violence, and in the *Taìn Bo Cuiligne*, the female seer foretells Cu Cuchlainn's forthcoming battles by the simple utterance: '*I see crimson, I see red'* (Kinsella 1969). Its use on martial objects therefore brings to mind the role of blood as a vital life force, associated with death or ill-health (through veinous or arterial flow after wounding) as well as fertility (through menstruation and childbirth, or rites of initiation involving blood-letting). In his *Natural History* (chapter 11 of book 32) Pliny the Elder noted that although coral was much coveted by the Gauls for decoration, due to its sacred or protective properties it was also worn as an amulet to protect the vulnerable bodies of infants (2007). Its 'redness' was seen as analogous to human fluids and skin, and made an excellent remedy in powdered form for those who brought up blood, whilst also being useful to 'efface' the cavities of ulcers and scars (ibid.): effectively replacing fluids or making flesh with a like substance.

Taçon's study of stone in Aboriginal Australia suggests that such mineral substances are often interpreted as the residues of ancestral fluids: in the case of quartz, it may be seen as fossilised semen (1991 and 1999). In a similar vein, Kruta has suggested that the pairing of coral and 'enamel' on many Continental objects suggests they were bound together conceptually as magical substances, representing the petrified blood of opposing natural forces: blood formed of water in the sea, and blood formed of fire in the forge (2004, 163).

In Turner's classic study, the Ndembu therefore say that 'Red things act for good or bad' (1969, 701–1), and this very ambiguity may be the source of its power as a colour. Although the source of red glass for the East Yorkshire material has not been identified, the coral certainly seems to have traded from the Mediterranean. Helms has suggested that amongst such small-scale communities, substances which are brought from a distance can be seen as heralding from a spiritual dimension, since distance is never purely geographic but also cosmological (1988). Whilst the execution of most of the objects discussed here was distinctly local, they were clearly influenced by Continental La Tène design. Both the inscribed artwork and substances used to embellish them may therefore have been imbued and charged with sacred or ancestral forces.

Returning to the Wetwang Village cart burial of 2001 for the last time, the many associations of the colour red would have been especially significant for the woman buried in this grave. Although there is disagreement amongst osteoarchaeologists (Hill, pers. comm.), one of the interpretations of the slight distortion of her skull is that she suffered from a facial haemangioma: a misgrowth of the blood-vessels which would have left one half of her face blood-red, lumpy and swollen in texture, from birth. Whilst we see this as a disfigurement, this woman may literally have been seen as ‘enamelled’ by the gods, empowered by the sacred and ambiguous qualities of this colour. Notably, she is equipped in death with the iron mirror decorated with blue glass beads. All of these aspects of her biography – her dislocated shoulder and distinctive birth mark, as well as her successful survival of childbirth into her senior years – may well have resulted in her role as an inter-mediary or seer, with privileged access to other times and other worlds. It may also help explain her elaborate ‘sending-off’ in death, equipped with a cart decorated in coral and red hot glass work, as an emissary to the ancestors.

Conclusion

In this attempt to ‘see red’ in the Iron Age, I have criticised traditional approaches to Celtic art which either focus on aspects of style and date, or simply explain these skilled items of craftwork as the trappings of a competitive warrior elite, sustained by prestige gift exchange. The article has not dwelt on the meanings of this art but instead suggests that archaeologists might more profitably consider *how* this material achieves its effect. I have therefore tried to present Celtic art as an integral part of martial objects, wielded in a series of encounters and performances, through which they gained meaning and power. I have compared them with other classes of artefact, and considered the importance of complex, abstract designs, brilliance, luminosity and colour, as well as sound, as part of what Gell would call a ‘technology of enchantment’. However, I have argued that it was only through the inculcated and entranced eye of the beholder that such objects could be used to exert authority over adversaries and competitors, or beguile people, spirits and ancestors. If we are to move into a different ‘way of seeing’ Celtic art then, I would argue it is to accept that its full meanings will always elude us… for its very intention *was* to confuse and intimidate… to awe, disorientate and ensnare.

Acknowledgements

The author owes her grateful thanks to the organisers of the AHRC-funded 'New Approaches to Celtic Art' Workshop, at which this paper was presented. The ideas within it were first discussed in my PhD thesis, funded by the AHRC, and presented at the 'Sarah Champion' Memorial Lecture for the Prehistoric Society in 2006: inspired by Sarah's contribution to work on coral and colour in the Iron Age. Discussions with colleagues working on later prehistory have greatly helped the development of this work: I would particularly like to thank Chris Gosden, Duncan Garrow and Vincent Megaw, Jody Joy, J. D. Hill and Danny Hind. The author is especially grateful to Simon James for discussing aspects of violence in the Iron Age, and to John Dent, for giving permission to discuss the Wetwang Slack material, based on analysis from an unpublished monograph. In addition, both Mary Davis and Marlies Hoechurl generously discussed their own work on the use of colour in the Iron Age, in advance of publication. The paper has also benefited from discussion with colleagues within the School of Arts, Histories and Cultures, University of Manchester and the University of Manchester Museum. Finally, Joanna Brück's mentorship during the IRCHSS postdoctoral fellowship held at UCD in 2002–2003, has been invaluable.

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5

Reflections on Celtic Art: a re-examination of mirror decoration

Jody Joy

Mirrors decorated with abstract curvilinear designs are a well known class of Early Celtic Art. Examples of these mirrors regularly feature in books about Celtic Art and there have been several influential studies of their design principles and possible meanings in the past. In this paper I outline a new methodology to understand the decoration on these mirror backs. This starts with identifying the individual design motifs that are used to decorate mirrors. It then examines how mirror decoration was constructed using different combinations of these motifs. The aim is to ascertain the design rules of mirror decoration. Using these design rules I will then establish criteria to compare mirror designs, which are derived from formal analysis. This will allow me to interrogate the existing developmental stylistic sequence of mirror design, which was created by comparing designs based on judgements of aesthetic worth (e.g. Fox 1958, 84–98) rather than analytically rigorous, defined criteria. I will end this paper by questioning the potential meaning of mirror decoration. When the meaning of abstract Celtic Art has been considered in the past it has most often been from the perspective that particular motifs must have stood for something (e.g. Fitzpatrick 2007, 351–2; Jope 2000, 114–5). These motifs are isolated from the objects they ornament and are ascribed specific meaning. I will argue that, in the case of mirrors, the decoration cannot be abstracted from the artefact. Mirror decoration is integral to the efficacy of the mirror it ornaments.

Mirror Decoration and the 'Mirror Style'

Decorated mirrors are a peculiarly British type of object and it is strange how insular this ‘classic’ type of Celtic object is. Twenty-seven of the known sixty British Iron Age mirrors are decorated (see Appendix A). The decorated mirrors are all made of bronze and date from the late 2nd century BC – mid 1st Century AD (Sealey 2006). Mirror decoration was inscribed or chased onto mirror backs (Lowery and Savage 1976; Lowery *et al*. 1971; 1976), on the opposite side to the reflective surface and individual designs vary widely. Designs were created using a distinct set of motifs, which are filled with basket-hatching. In addition to the decoration on mirror backs the term ‘mirror style’ is also used to describe other objects decorated with the same hatched motifs, including some sword scabbards and items of horse harness (see Fox 1946, 53; 1958, 84–98; De Navarro 1952, 79).

Summary of Previous Studies

The decoration on mirror backs has been examined before, most notably by Fox (1958, 84–98) and Jope (2000, 137–48). Echoing work on other forms of Celtic Art, previous studies of mirror decoration tend to be very descriptive. They have attempted to identify regional styles, locations of production and have worked to create a chronologically significant, evolutionary sequence of mirror design. This stylistic sequence is still influential in dating decorated mirrors (e.g. see discussion by E. M. Jope in Fulford and Creighton 1998, 339). The sequence was created by comparing designs based on aesthetic value judgements. It is anchored by the limited number of mirrors found with datable associated artefacts. Mirror design, it has been argued, underwent a necessary, preliminary, developmental stage and a ‘flowering’ epitomised by the patterned back of the mirrors placed later in the sequence, like Desborough (see Jope 2000, 142), as each new generation of mirror design ‘improved’ upon previous designs. Mirrors placed latest in the sequence, like the Nijmegen mirror, are examples of mirror design which is past its peak (see Dunning 1928, 212). Mirror decoration as it appears in these studies, can be seen to take on a life of its own; it seems to be self-perpetuating, always evolving and becoming ‘better’ as each new generation of mirrors ‘improves’ on the previous one, forming an unbroken sequence of design.

Interpretations as to why decoration changed over time tend to concentrate on explaining how and why designs got ‘better’. For example, according to Fox, the ‘rapid development’ of mirror design was due to market-forces: mirror design ‘developed’ because of “…intelligent and selective buying by high-born ladies” (1958 122–3, 139). Mirrors were produced by craftsmen working under the patronage of high-status individuals and each time a new mirror was made, they strived to ‘improve upon’ previous ones, made in the same workshop, as patrons vied with one another and attempted to possess ‘better’ mirrors.

Re-assessment of the Existing Categorisation of Mirror Decoration

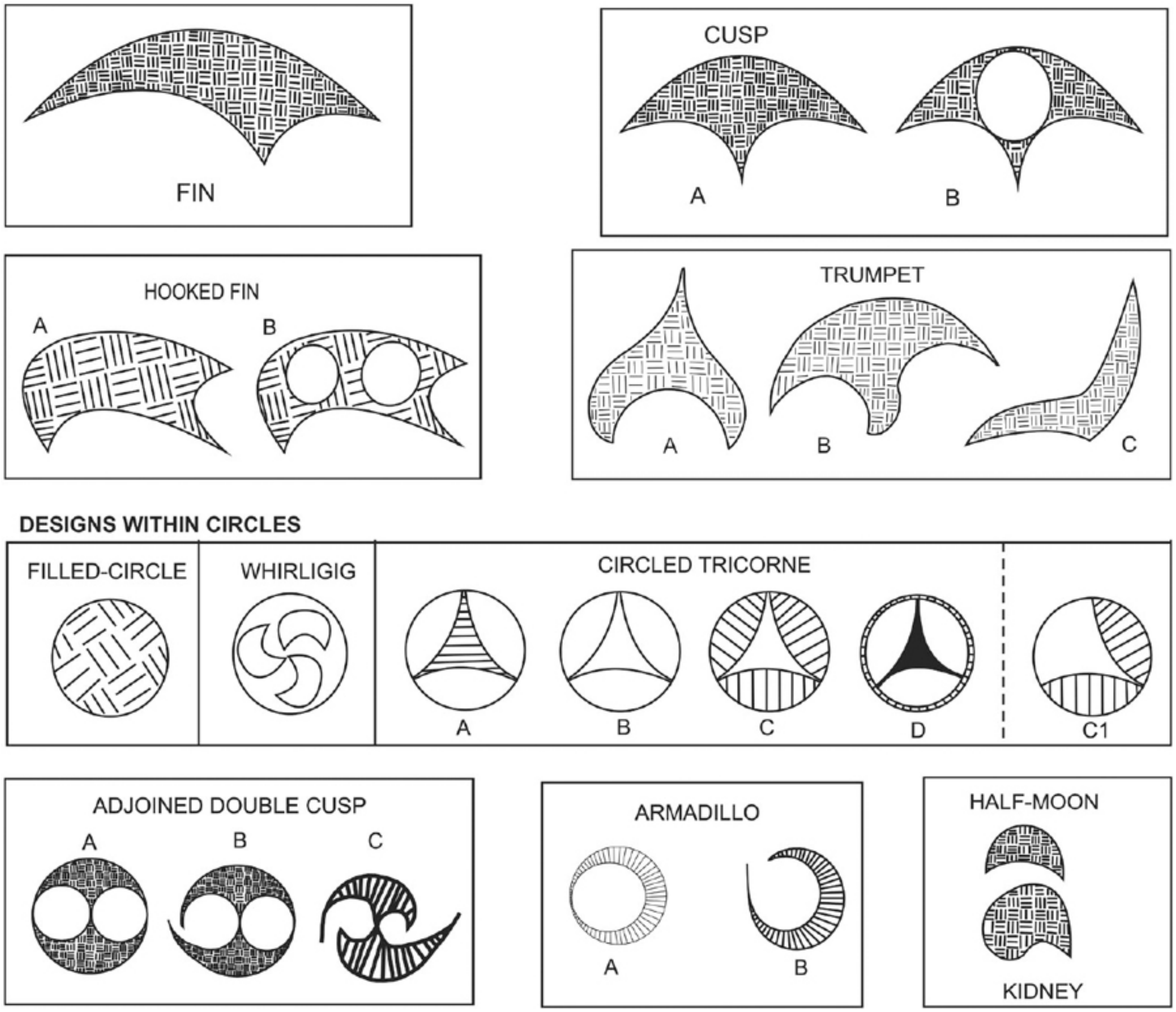
A modern model of ‘art’ and the ‘art-world’ has been imposed on mirror design, where ‘aesthetic taste’ is valued and artworks are compared and assessed on the basis of judgements of aesthetic worth. No criteria or explanation for why one design is valued above another is put forward. No specific criteria of what makes one mirror-design ‘better’ than another is given, even though assessments of ‘success’ are often made. Often judgements were based, not just on the design itself, but also the technical proficiency of the inscriber. For the majority of decorated mirrors, the processes of constructing a design and physically inscribing it onto a mirror plate were probably separate operations. Many mirror designs were laid out using compasses and designs are far too complicated and precise to indicate that they were created as they were inscribed. Planning a design and inscribing it are therefore two different processes that should not be confused. As Philip Macdonald (2007, 334) has suggested, whilst this kind of approach is extremely valuable to dealers, collectors and museum curators, it does not tell us much about objects like mirrors, or the Iron Age. Mirror design, like all Celtic Art, is a product of the particular social context in which it was created and we do not know how each individual design was valued in the Iron Age. We are therefore unable to judge whether one mirror design is ‘better’ than another and it is invalid to place all of the decorated mirrors in a line and chart the rise (and fall) of mirror decoration. The assumptions that underlie the idea of a stylistic sequence enforce a particular kind of interpretation with an implied chronological progression. The constructed sequence of mirror design is a result of the particular privileged viewpoint from which we are able to examine mirror decoration as archaeologists (see Jones 2001, 339), which has been viewed through a western cultural lens. Iron Age people almost certainly did not have the benefit of seeing a large number of decorated mirrors like we do. Based on the number of mirrors we find in the archaeological record, it is unlikely that a single person would have encountered a significant number in their lifetime.

Different models of metalworking, such as the idea of the workshop or itinerant metalworker, have been uncritically applied to the making of mirrors. For example, Fox's (1958) analysis uses a model that is similar to the world of Renaissance art portrayed in Benvenuto Cellini's autobiography (Cellini 1926). It relies on the existence of 'workshops' and 'patrons'; these models for artefact production have not been tested in an Iron Age context. Complicated objects like mirrors could have been made by several individuals, the whole process being coordinated by a particular individual or group. The relationships formulated during mirror manufacture would have been critical in setting the trajectories of the future lives of mirrors and the way mirrors were decorated would have formed a significant part of this process. J. D. Hill has questioned how Iron Age society was structured (see Hill 2006; 2007). Everyday life was probably ordered at a local level (Hill 2006, 175) and the evidence uncovered so far shows that the organisation of Iron Age society varied greatly between regions and over time (see Cunliffe 2004; 2005; Hill 1996; 2006; 2007; Hingley 1984; Moore 2007a; 2007b). The relationships between artefacts and their producers were not passive (Jones 2001, 339) and new forms of social differentiation could have been expressed through the creation of metal artefacts (Hingley 2005, 188).

Analytical Process

We can move beyond merely descriptive analyses of mirror decoration. Building upon previous work and, through a re-examination of mirror decoration using my own methodology, I will break down the idea of an evolutionary stylistic sequence and argue that there is no chronological 'development' of mirror design. Through a re-examination of mirror decoration, I will also contest previous interpretations of why mirrors were decorated. In an attempt to remove some of the value judgements associated with the history of the analysis of mirror decoration I will undertake a series of analytical processes:

- First, I will establish criteria to enable comparison between designs on the different mirrors. These criteria are based on individual design motifs. By identifying the basic building-blocks used to construct mirror design, I will have a means to compare mirrors and their decoration that is derived from formal analysis and defined, specific criteria.
- Second, I will identify design rules used to create mirror design.
- Third, I will examine the space on the mirror which is not utilised.
- Finally, I will consider the complexity of mirror design.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WHIRLIGIG
CIRCLED TRICORNE
A
B
C
D
C1
ADJOINED DOUBLE CUSP
A
B
C
ARMADILLO
A
B
HALF-MOON
KIDNEY

Figure 5.1. Positive mirror motif repertoire (drawn by the author)

Definitions

Before I discuss the first stage of this analytical process, it is necessary to briefly explain how mirror decoration works and introduce some terminology. The surface of the mirror back containing decoration and delimited by the edge of the mirror plate will be referred to as the *design-field*. The overall *design* is the distinctive pattern within the design-field. Space within the design-field can be defined on three different levels. At the first level are the *positive motifs*. These are delimited by hatching. At the second level *negative motifs* are areas of distinctive and repeated form within the design-field left un-hatched. Negative motifs are created by positive motifs and the edge of the design-field. At the third level any part of the design-field which is not a positive or negative motif is defined as *unused space*. Unused space describes any un-hatched area in the design field which does not have a coherent form which is repeated two or more times in the same design. This definition allows for the fact that in a symmetrical design, like the decoration on the Nijmegen mirror, negative areas will be repeated through the act of symmetry.

Positive Mirror Motifs

I examined the decoration on all of the decorated mirrors and isolated the positive motifs that have been inscribed on them (Figure 5.1). The positive motifs used to create mirror design are limited in number. Analysis of other decorated Iron Age material culture has revealed that none of these motifs are unique to mirrors (Joy 2008). The names I have used to describe individual motifs are derived from Fox (1958), Jope (2000) and MacGregor (1976). Where I have been unable to find a term to describe a particular motif I have used my own, solely descriptive, terminology (see Appendix B for an explanation of all terms used).

Mirror design is constructed using three main positive motifs. The ‘fin’ is the most important. This three-sided motif is stretched and curved to form the main sections of the positive design on the majority of the decorated mirrors. The ‘cusp’ is another widely used mirror motif. The third major motif is the ‘trumpet’, which comes in various forms. In addition to these three basic motifs, a number of less common ones have been identified. These are used in combination with fins, cusps and trumpets to form mirror design. Designs within circles are small in size and are also found on some mirror handles. The ‘armadillo’ motif is often utilised as an embellishment to a fin or a cusp. The ‘kidney’ and ‘half-moon’ motifs can be seen on the design of the Birldip and Nijmegen mirrors respectively.

Negative Mirror Motifs

Negative mirror motifs are often identical in form to the positive ones. I have identified negative ‘tricornes’, ‘circles’, ‘crescent-shapes’, ‘keeled-roundels’, ‘cusps’ and ‘fins’ (Figure 5.2). Negative motifs are not only delineated by the positive motifs, they can also be framed within the confines of the mirror plate. The rim surrounding some of the mirrors often acts to re-emphasise this, operating in a similar way to the edge of positive motifs.

Alongside the fin and the cusp, the most significant negative motif is the ‘trumpet-void’, which has also been referred to as the ‘Llyn Cerrig void’ (Fox 1946). The trumpet-void has been identified on many objects including the decoration on the bronze plaque from Llyn Cerrig Bach and the openwork sheet bronze cover for the shield-boss from the Deal grave, Kent (Parfitt 1995, fig. 23).

Construction of Mirror Design

The next stage of my analytical process is to identify how mirror motifs are organised to form characteristic mirror designs: how did they take the identified motifs and come up with a design? Fox (1946, 56 and fig. 31) compared the design of the Llyn Cerrig shield boss to the designs of the Billericay, Desborough and Birdlip mirrors. He showed that negative motifs – especially the trumpet-void – consistently form an integral component of the overall design of mirrors (Fox 1958, 84–98). Fox demonstrated the importance of negative motifs to the overall coherency of mirror designs through the example of the Mayer mirror which he illustrated in his book ‘*Pattern and Purpose* like a photographic negative, so that the negative motifs were filled black (ibid., Plate 56a). My analysis of all of the decorated mirrors has confirmed Fox’s suggestion that negative motifs are critical to mirror design.

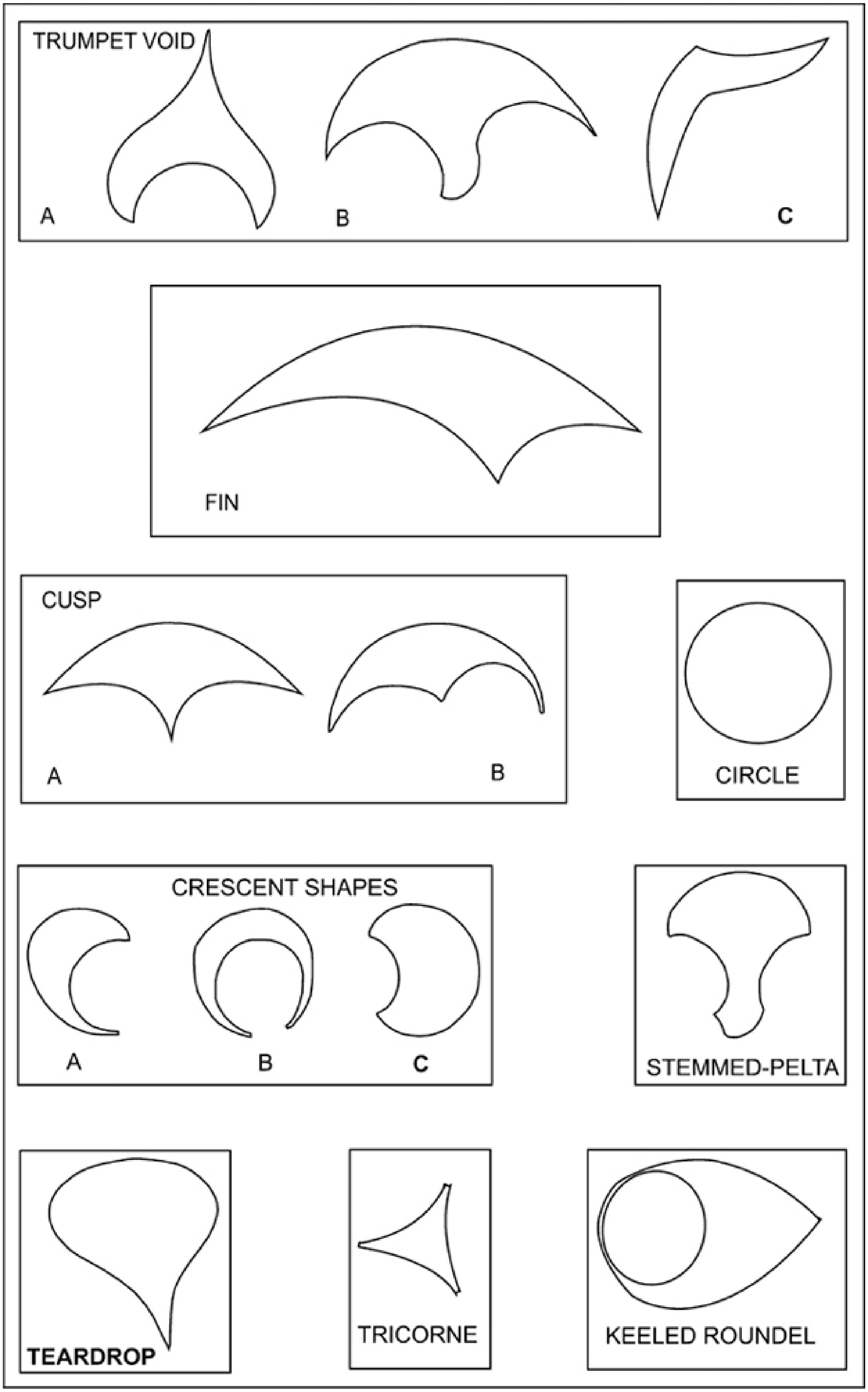

TRUMPET VOID
A
B
C
FIN
CUSP
A
B
CIRCLE
CRESCENT SHAPES
A
B
C
STEMMED-PELTA
TEARDROP
TRICORNE
KEELED ROUNDEL

Figure 5.2. Negative mirror motif repertoire (drawn by the author)

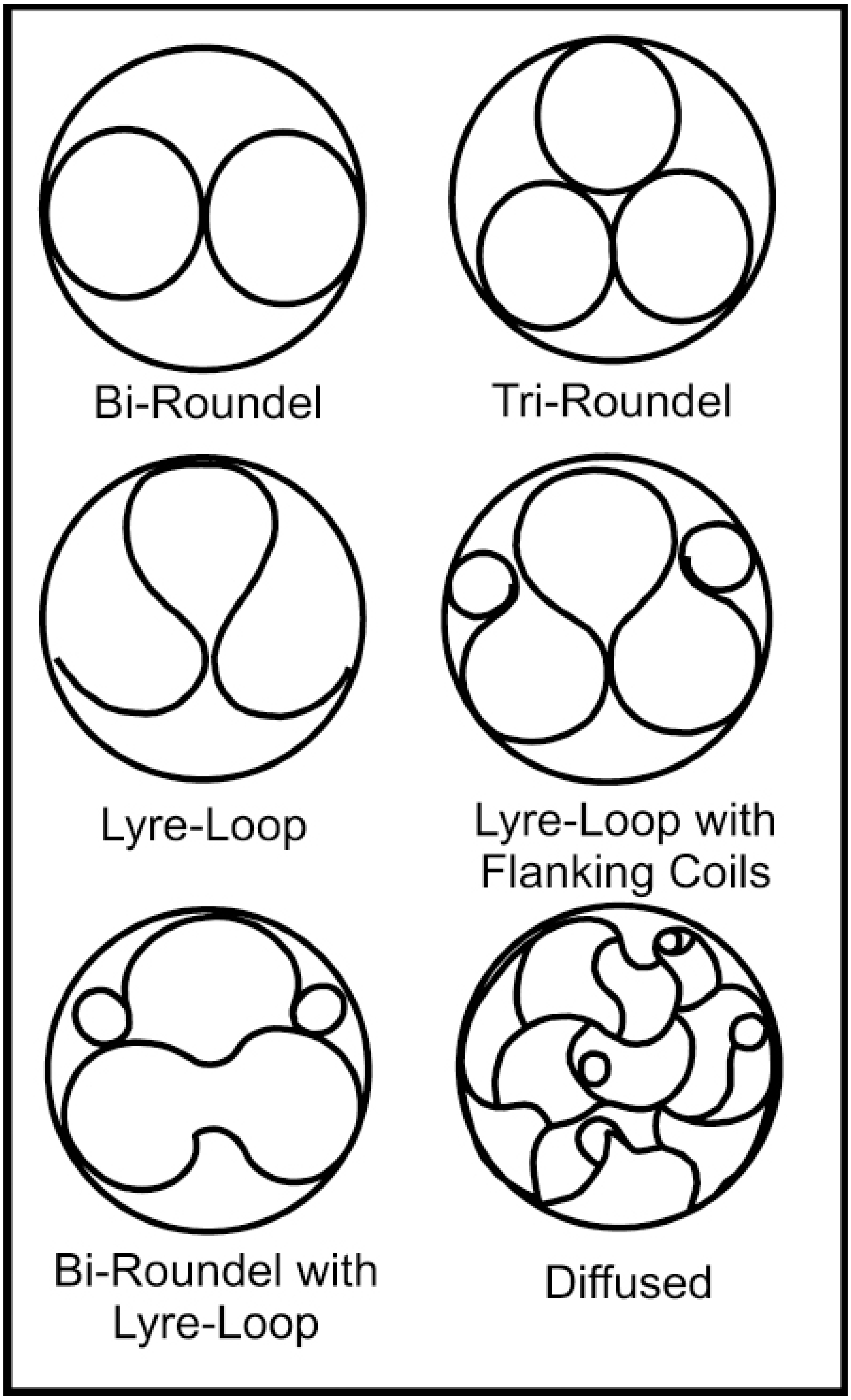

Bi-Roundel
Tri-Roundel
Lyre-Loop
Lyre-Loop with Flanking Coils
Bi-Roundel with Lyre-Loop
Diffused

Figure 5.3. Six outlines of mirror design (drawn by the author)

Mirror design is consistently constructed using a small number of positive *and negative* motifs. Mirror decoration can only be understood in terms of the relationship of its positive *and negative* elements. Mirrors are decorated so that they conform to a set of design rules. Even though mirror designs can vary greatly I have found through my analysis that all but two of the decorated mirrors conform to these design rules. Mirror design is made up of positive and negative motifs which form a balanced composition in order to keep unused spaces to a minimum.

The Outline of Mirror Design

A number of different methods were developed to construct designs to conform to these design rules. Working through a sample of different mirror designs and taking into consideration the identified design rules, it was discovered that an initial framework could be created which divided the design-field into more readily comprehensible areas. These could then subsequently be further sub-divided. Fox (ibid., fig. 62) identified four basic mirror designs. Recent discoveries have revealed two more (Figure 5.3).

‘Bi-roundel’

The simplest way to divide the design field into smaller units, which was used on the St. Keverne mirror, was to draw two equal-sized circles along the centre line of a circular plate. This has the effect of creating two large negative cusp motifs above and below the circles, and two smaller circular areas, in which further motifs could be inscribed.

‘Tri-roundel’

When three circles are placed in a circular plate, as with the design of the Mayer mirror, three negative areas are created at the edge of the mirror, two fins and a cusp. One of the mirrors from Stamford Hill also appears to have used a similar method of dividing the design field.

‘Lyre Loop’

The decoration on the Aston and Gibbs mirrors employs a ‘lyre-loop’ to section off the design-field. This has the effect of creating three negative motifs at the edge of the design-field, two trumpet-voids and a cusp at the bottom.

‘Lyre Loop with Flanking Coils’

A number of the mirrors employ a ‘lyre-loop with flanking coils’ to section off the design-field. This frames five negative motifs at the edge of the mirror plate; four fins at the side and a cusp at the bottom. In the example of the Birdlip mirror, the three large tear-shaped areas defined by the lyre-loop were further subdivided by drawing more lyre-loops within them (Figure 5.4). This framed more negative motifs. The process of subdivision continued until six small circular areas were left. This pattern of the construction of the design can be seen for the majority of the decorated mirrors. For example, the design of the Portesham mirror was built up from a lyre-loop with flanking coils until eight circular areas were delineated (Figure 5.5).

‘Bi-Roundel with Lyre Loop with Flanking Coils’

The design of the Pegsden mirror is arranged in a different way. Two circles are outlined at the bottom of the mirror and an elongated lyre-loop is positioned above these two circles, creating four negative fin shapes on the right and left hand outside edges of the plate and a trumpet-void at the bottom. A recently discovered mirror, possibly from Oxfordshire (Burleigh and Megaw 2007), also uses the same method of dividing the design.

‘Diffused’ Designs

The designs on the Old Warden and Great Chesterford mirrors work in a different way. These are not organised into an overall framework of a lyre-loop or within circles: instead, the designs appear to be random. In order to determine how these more diffused designs were created I examined the negative motifs on the Old Warden mirror and ranked them in terms of their coherency (Figure 5.6): how well they compared to identified motifs. The most coherent motifs on the Old Warden mirror are located on the left-hand-side of the plate circling around to the top of the plate (marked in black Figure 5.6c). The next most coherent motifs are located on the right hand edge of the plate (marked in black Figure 5.6d) and the least coherent are located in the middle (marked in black Figure 5.6e). This shows that the decoration was probably applied in a spiral shape starting at the left-hand edge working its way around the rim of the plate and finishing in the centre (Figure 5.6b).

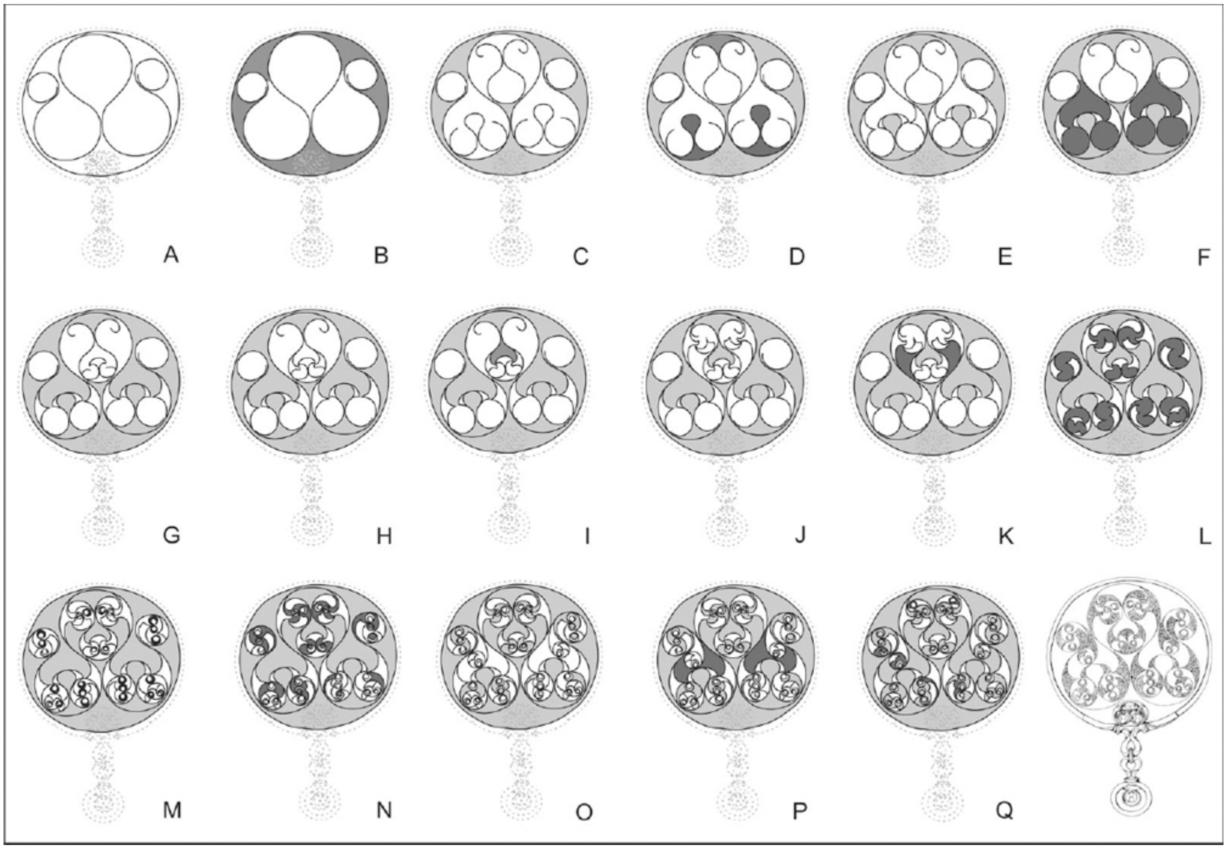
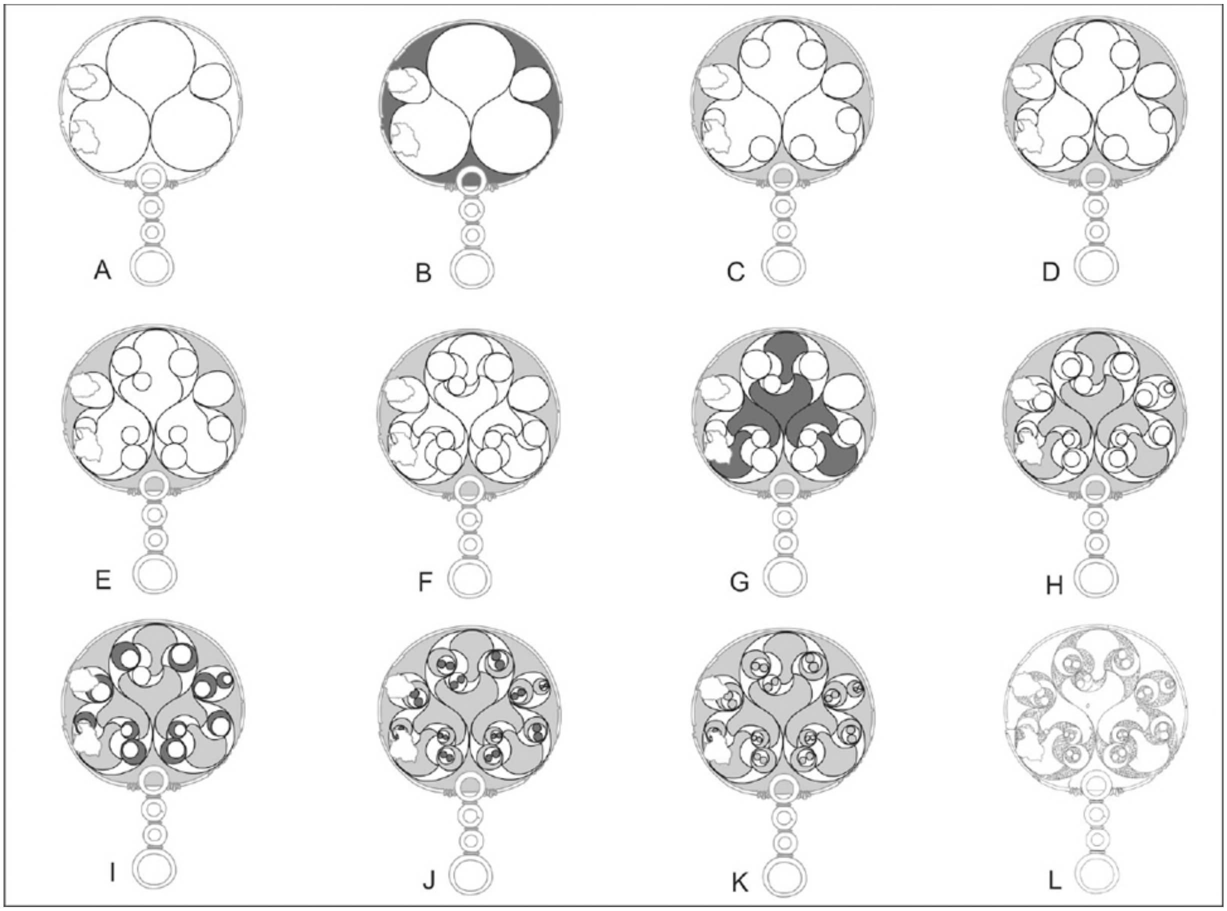


Figure 5.4. Stages of construction of the design on the Birdlip mirror (drawn by the author)


A
B
C
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E
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K
L

Figure 5.5. Stages of construction of the design of the Portesham mirror (drawn by the author)

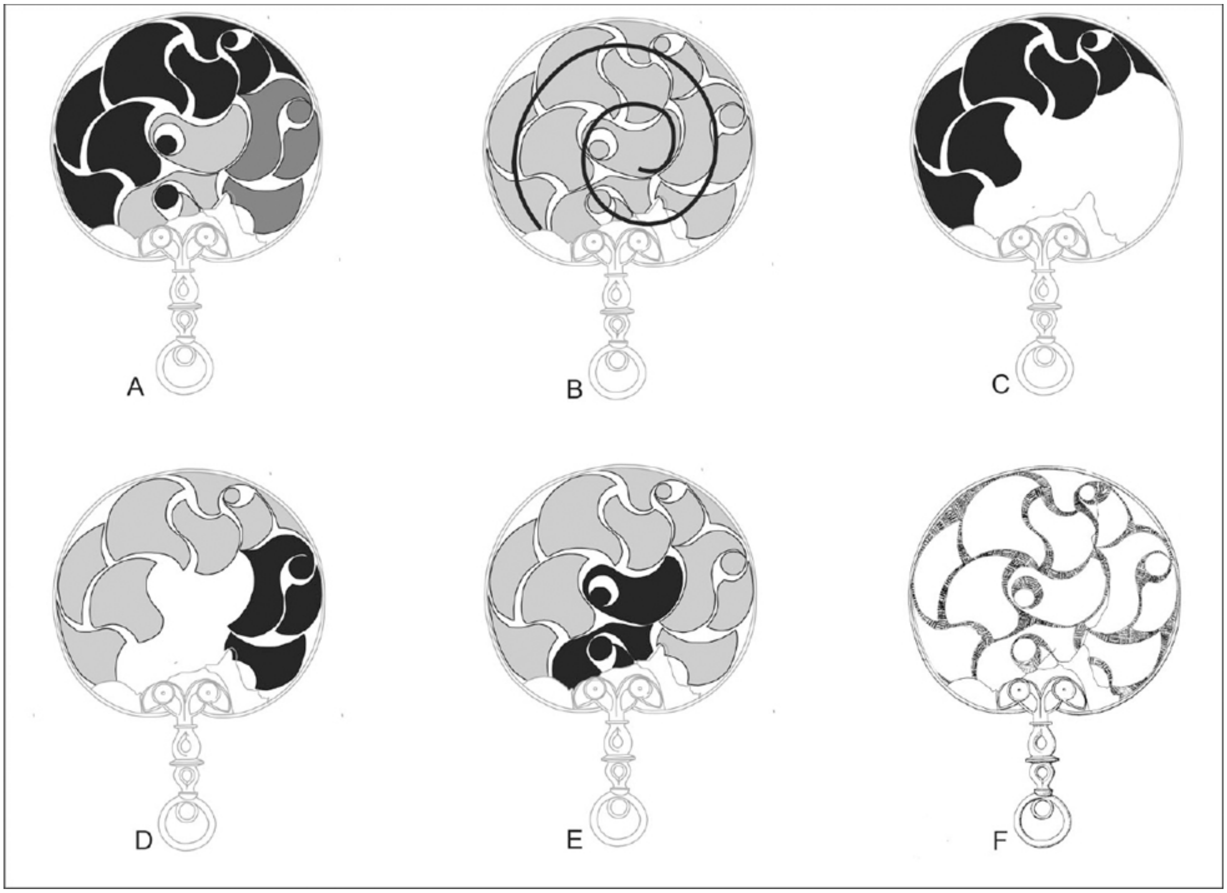


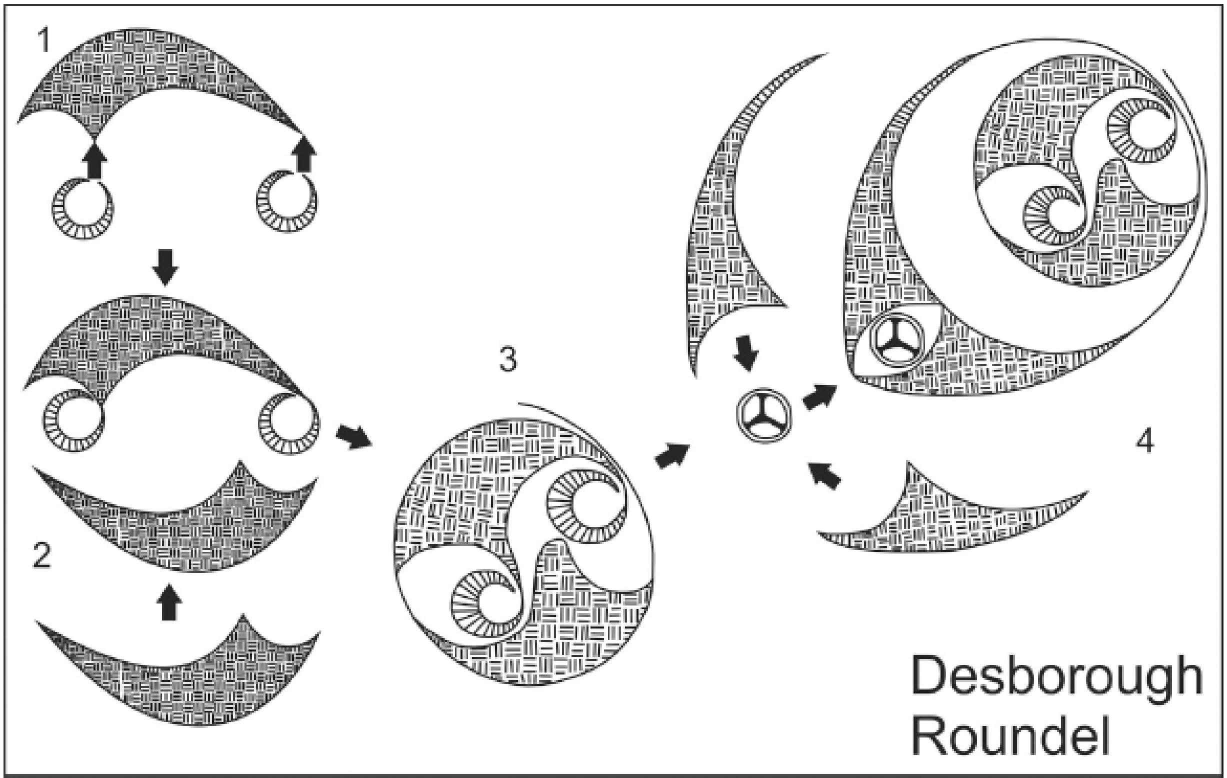
Figure 5.6. Stages of construction of the design on the Old Warden mirror (drawn by the author)

At each stage in the construction of mirror design, the design-field is divided into smaller, more readily comprehensible units, which obey the specified design rules. This process continued until a series of small circular units were isolated. How these were designed varies greatly from mirror to mirror and the exact reasons for placing particular motifs in specific positions within these circular areas will remain in the minds of the people who created individual designs.

Finer Detail

If we take an example from the Desborough mirror we can see how a fin and armadillo motif can be combined to fill a circular area (Figure 5.7). An armadillo shape is added to a fin and an additional fin is joined to it end-on-end. The fins are then curved around. In the case of the

Desborough mirror the design was further complicated with the addition of two more fin shapes and a circled tricorne, forming a keeled-roundel.


Desborough Roundel

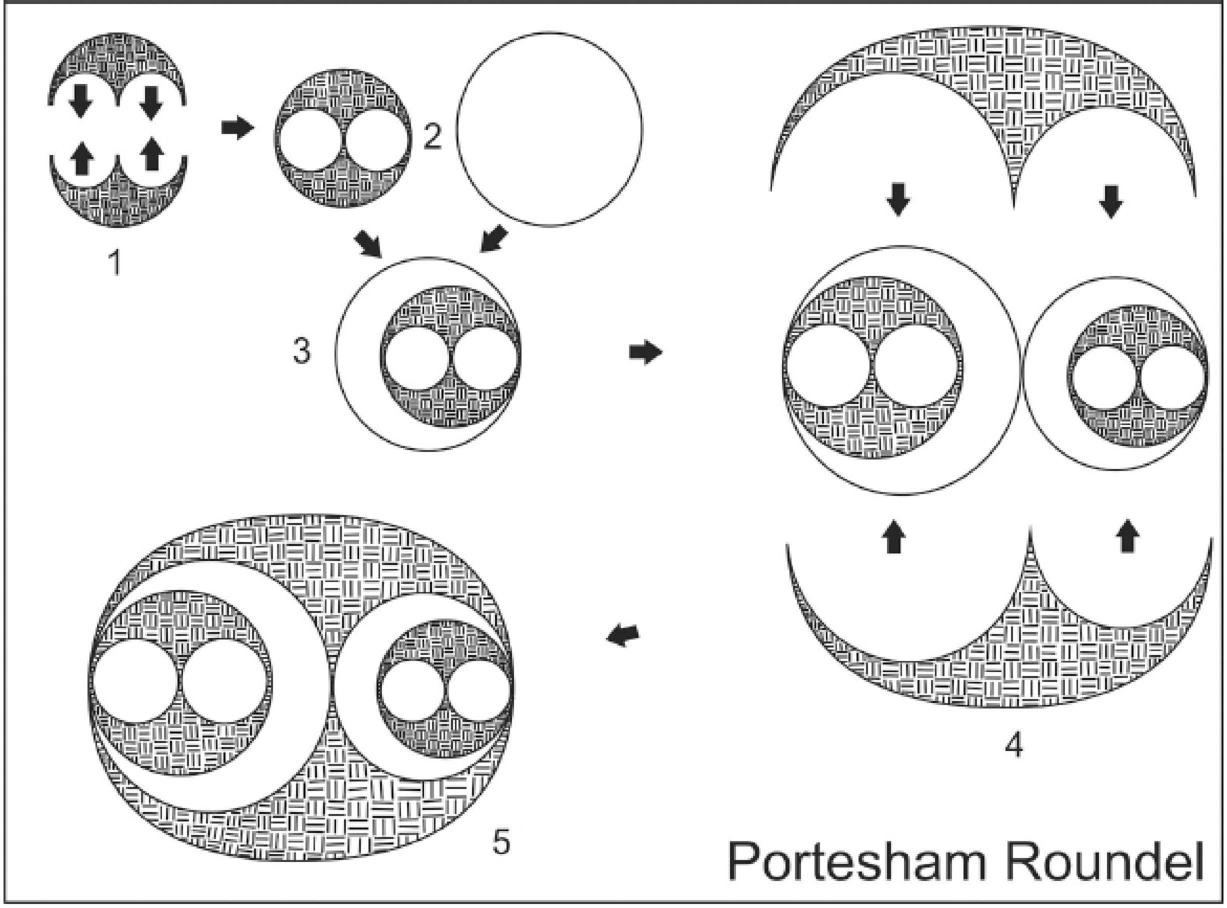

Portesham Roundel

Figure 5.7. Details of the construction of roundels on the Desborough and Portesham mirrors (drawn by the author)

If we look at a section of the decoration on the Portesham mirror, two cusps were put together end-on-end to form a circle with two circular voids (Figure 5.7). A larger circle was then drawn around this motif, with the bottom edges of the two circles touching. Two motifs of this type, one smaller than the other, can be encompassed within two fins creating the oval-shaped areas of decoration found on the Portesham mirror.

‘Unused’ Space

An appreciation of both positive and negative components is of key importance to mirror design. In order to move away from the idea of ‘success’ it is necessary to establish criteria to compare the designs of individual mirrors. One way to do this is to quantify the ‘unused’ space in a mirror design. The positive and negative motifs on each mirror were tallied, as well as areas of unused space. Unused space was then calculated as a percentage of the total area of the design-field. By distinguishing how positive and negative mirror motifs are employed to create the overall design, it is possible to identify the depth of the designer’s understanding of the principles of design composition. Where negative motifs are not present and there are numerous unused spaces, the positive motifs have clearly been copied without a true understanding of the composition rules of mirror-design.

The results of my analysis (Table 5.1) indicate that the decoration on three mirrors most successfully fulfil these criteria: Aston, Desborough and Pegsdon. On the Aston mirror 100% of the mirror plate surface is composed of interlocked positive and negative motifs. On the Desborough and Pegsdon mirrors it is 99%. The majority of the other mirror-designs fall between 70% and 90% of the surface of the mirror plate being filled with demonstrable and consistent positive and negative motifs.

Mirror	Number of Positive Motifs	Number of Negative Motifs	'Unused' Space	% of Mirror Surface Used
Aston, Hertfordshire	11	10	0	100
Billericay I, Essex	15	9	2	92
Birdlip, Gloucestershire	64	77	7	95
Bromham, Bedfordshire	30	16	2	96
Bryher, Scilly Isles	2	0	-	-
Bulbury, Dorset	-	-	-	-
Chettle, Dorset	44	23	14	83
Chilham Castle, Kent	6	5	2	85
Colchester I, (Lexden Grange)	14	9	0	100
Colchester II (Hyberabad Barracks)	1	-	-	-
Desborough, Northants	130	94	3	99
Disney	7	-	-	-
Dorton, Buckinghamshire	16	13	3	91
Gibbs	21	17	6	86
Great Chesterford, Essex	40	24	8	89
Holcombe, Devon	82	68	10	94
Latchmere Green, near Silchester, Hampshire	41	26	5	93
Mayer	19	48	4	94
Mount Batten I, Plymouth	22	10	9	78
Nijmegen, The Netherlands	38	11	35	58
Old Warden I, Bedfordshire	30	13	3	93
Oxford	84	84	7	96
Pegsdon, Shillington, Bedfordshire	104	109	1	99
Portesham, Dorset	40	40	0	100
Portland, The Verne	3	4	3	70
Rickling, Essex	-	-	-	-
Rivenhall I, Essex	5	5	1	91
St. Keverne, Trelan Bahow, Cornwall	10	12	10	69
The Verne, Portland, Dorset	3	2	-	-

Table 5.1. Analysis of ‘used’ decorated space on mirror backs

Complexity

Complexity is defined by the number of individual motifs in each design: the most complex designs contain the most motifs. The design of the Aston mirror contains only twenty or so motifs in total. The designs on the Desborough and Pegsdon mirrors, on the other hand, are decorated with in excess of 200 separate, identifiable motifs with very few areas of waste-space. Simplicity of form does not necessarily imply simplicity of meaning (Le Bon 1995, 175). However, it is more difficult to produce a complex mirror-design containing many individual motifs, which obeys the specified design rules.

The Bryher and Nijmegen Mirrors: Exceptions to the Overall Pattern

The two mirror-designs that do not conform to the dominant pattern are from Bryher and Nijmegen. The Bryher mirror is the earliest known decorated mirror (Johns 2006). Although it is similar in size and shape to the mirror from St. Keverne, the positive motifs that are distinguishable on its plate are very different from those present on the designs of the other decorated mirrors.

The Nijmegen mirror is interesting because it was found in a Roman grave in The Netherlands (Dunning 1928) that is dated to around AD 100, or just after (Issings 1957, 81–3; Sealey 2006, 18; Price and Cottam 1998, 139). This is at least twenty-five years after most of the other mirrors were deposited. As is illustrated in Figure 5.8, the design of the Desborough mirror consists of a balance of positive and negative motifs. In contrast, although the design on the Nijmegen mirror uses ‘mirror-style’ positive motifs, the negative spaces are largely ignored in the layout of the positive design. We should probably see the decoration on the back of the Nijmegen mirror as an example where positive motifs seen on other mirrors have been borrowed and applied to a mirror back but where the conventions of mirror design have not been followed. Although the Nijmegen mirror may have been old before it was placed in a grave, it is very probable that the Nijmegen mirror was made and decorated at a later date than the majority of the decorated mirrors.

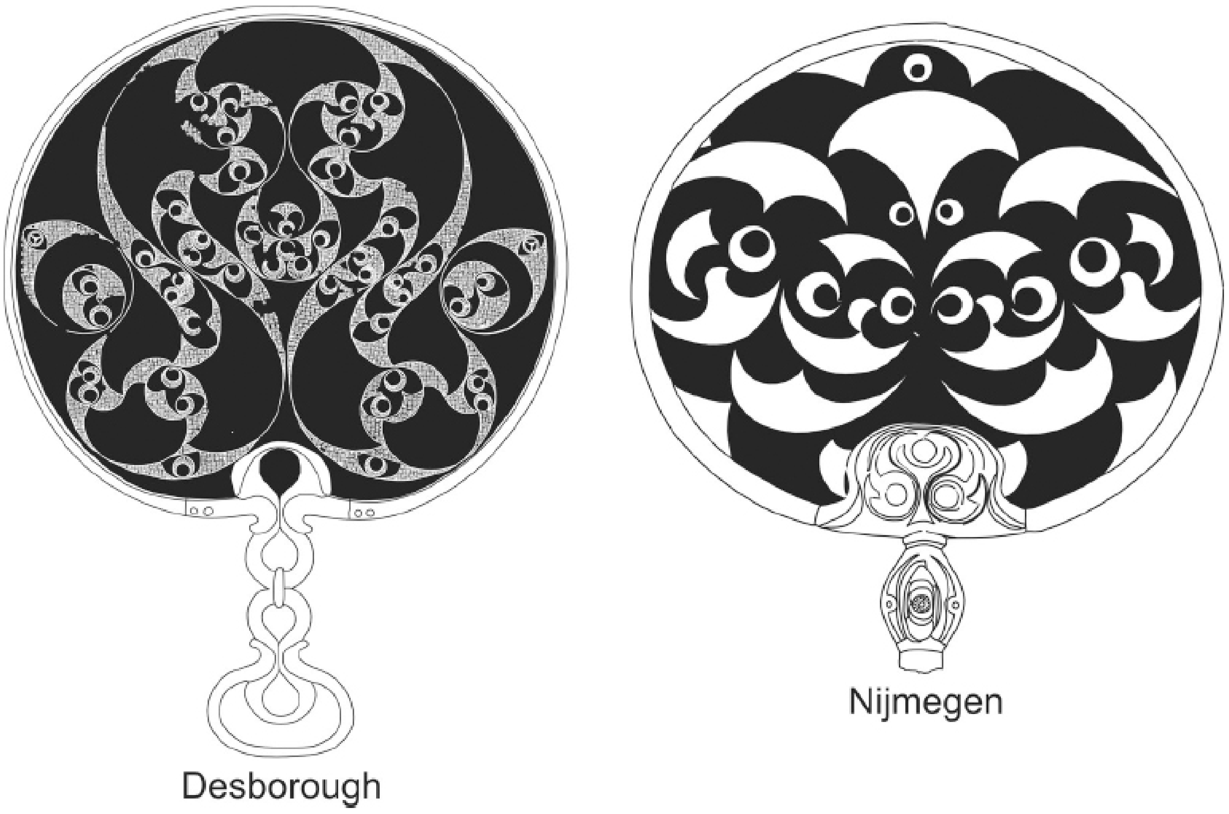


Figure 5.8. The Desborough and Nijmegen mirrors illustrated in photographic negative (drawn by the author)

Regional and Temporal Trends

I now want to describe how mirror-design changed through time and to identify regional or temporal patterns in the use of certain motifs. Importantly this does not imply a chronological stylistic sequence. Two broad groups of mirrors can be identified, with spatial and chronological significance, where mirror designs are similar: south-eastern England; and a ‘western’ group. The regional groupings based on decoration can be confirmed by contextual evidence and morphology.

Southeast England Mirrors

Where good contextual evidence is present the south-eastern mirrors are found in cremation burials, often alongside pottery and brooches (Burleigh and Megaw 2007, Farley 1983; Fulford and Creighton 1998; Parfitt 1998; Rook 1982). These cremations date from around c.75–25 BC, although some may be slightly later (Sealey 2006). Decoration on the backs of the mirrors from southeast England is characterised by a filled/empty circle, or a circled tricorne, within a keeled-roundel (see Bromham and Great Chesterford in Figure 5.9). These motifs are common to all of the decorated south-eastern mirrors, even those like Old Warden or Great Chesterford, with ‘diffused’ designs. Pegsdon and Oxford have keeled-roundels. Aston, Billericay, Dorton, Old Warden, Rivenhall I and Latchmere Green all have keeled-roundels with empty circles. Bromham, Chilham Castle, Colchester I (Lexden Grange) and Great Chesterford have roundels, or keeled-roundels, containing filled circles or circled-tricornes. The un-provenanced Mayer and Gibbs mirrors are both decorated with keeled-roundels and are small in size, suggesting that they probably belong in the south-eastern group.

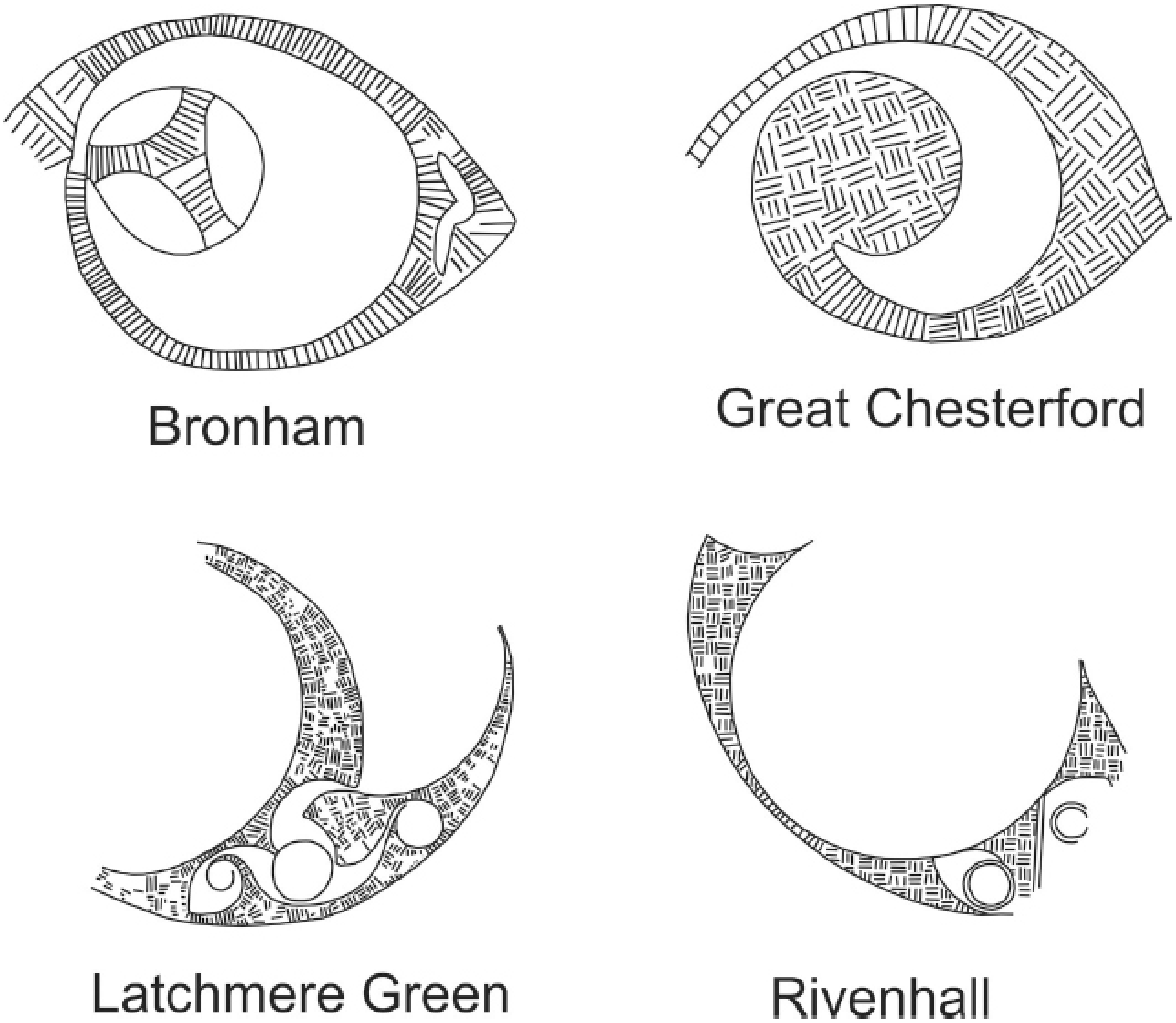


Figure 5.9. Detail of decoration on four mirrors (drawn by author)

‘Western’ Mirrors

The ‘western’ group of mirrors has long been identified (see Fitzpatrick 1997; Fox 1958; Fox and Pollard 1973). The geographical distribution of the mirror finds is seen to be confined to the ‘Jurassic Ridge’, a band surrounding the fringes of the south-eastern corner of England. Where we have dating evidence these mirrors look to have been deposited during the middle centuries of the 1st century AD (Fitzpatrick 1997; Sealey 2006). Aileen Fox (1972; 1973, 32–3) discussed the ‘western mirror school’ of mirrors in the context of the Holcombe mirror. The ‘western’ mirror group are seen to share similar designs, common motifs and were made using similar techniques. The mirrors are large in size, the majority of the mirror plates are rimmed and the decoration is organised within a lyre with flanking coils. Analysis of the motifs of the ‘western group’ suggests that the unifying motif, unique to this group of mirrors is the armadillo or ‘crescent motif’ identified by Fox (1973, fig. 12 (4)). This motif can be found on the Birdlip, Chettle, Desborough, Holcombe and Mount Batten mirrors as well as the fragment from The Verne, Portland. The exception is Portesham where it is absent.

Sub-Regional Groups

Within the south-eastern and south-western mirror regional groups a number of mirrors sharing similar decoration can be identified. The most obvious are the mirrors with a more ‘diffused’ design, from Old Warden and Great Chesterford. The Latchmere Green and Rivenhall I mirrors also have similar decoration with negative motifs incorporated within positive fin motifs (Figure 5.9), as do the newly discovered mirrors from Pegsdon and Oxfordshire (see Burleigh and Megaw 2007).

The St. Keverne and Bryher mirrors look to be related due to their geographical proximity and a similarity in size and form and the distinctive triangular motifs circumnavigating the edge of both mirror plates. The mirrors were also placed in stone-lined cist graves at approximately the same time. The dating of these burials also suggests that they are the earliest decorated mirrors (Johns 2006). However, as has already been suggested, despite all of these similarities the decoration on the backs of the two mirrors is quite different. The decoration on the St. Keverne mirror shares many motifs with the other decorated mirrors, especially the ones from southeast England. Shared motifs include circled-tricornes and keeled-roundels. Some attention is also paid to negative motifs within the design. The major difference between the St. Keverne and the south-eastern mirrors is the bi-roundel layout of the design on the former. The decoration on the Bryher mirror appears to be very different and it is unclear how the overall design was set-out.

Temporal Trends

Tied to these major groupings of decorated mirrors, a number of trends and changes can also be identified in the ways in which mirrors were decorated through time. The positive motifs on some of the earlier south-eastern mirrors are very difficult to identify. Indeed, on some of the mirrors like Chilham Castle, Dorton and Disney, the positive decoration is in the form of very narrow, hatched lines, which on the surface do not resemble motifs. I would argue that these lines are still broadly fin-shaped, with the possible exception of the motifs on the Chilham Castle mirror. On mirrors, where positive motifs are less well defined, the primary function of the positive motifs seems to be to demarcate negative motifs, which form the majority of used space in the design field. There is a greater concern with clearly defining each individual positive motif on the designs of the later 'western mirrors'. The negative motifs in the designs of the 'western' mirrors also tend to be much smaller in size.

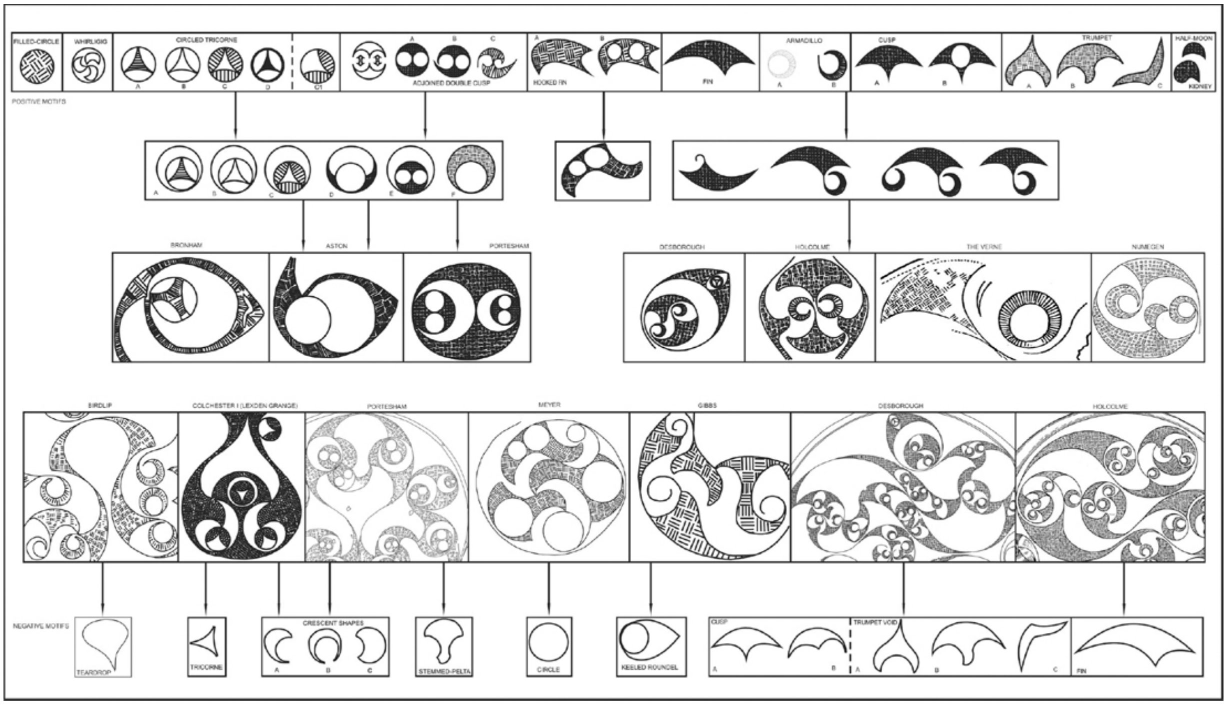

FILLED-CIRCLE
WHIRLIGIG
CIRCLED TRICORNE
A
B
C
D
C1
A
B
C
ADJOINED DOUBLE CUSP
A
B
HOOKED FIN
FIN
ARMADILLO
A
B
CUSP
A
B
TRUMPET
A
B
C
HALF-MOON
KIDNEY
POSITIVE MOTIFS
A
B
C
D
E
F
BRONHAM
ASTON
PORTESHAM
DESBOROUGH
HOLCOLME
THE VERNE
NIJMEGEN
BIRDLIP
COLCHESTER I (LEXDEN GRANGE)
PORTESHAM
MEYER
GIBBS
DESBOROUGH
HOLCOLME
NEGATIVE MOTIFS
TEARDROP
TRICORNE
CRESCENT SHAPES
A
B
C
STEMMED-PELTA
CIRCLE
KEELED ROUNDEL
CUSP
A
B
TRUMPET VOID
A
B
C
FIN

Figure 5.10. Graphical illustration of mirror design (drawn by author)

Conclusions

In conclusion, using a series of analytical techniques to examine mirror decoration I have shown that it is consistently constructed with a limited group of positive motifs. These are organised so that they frame negative motifs within the design field (see Figure 5.10 for a summary of mirror design). The composition is structured in such a way that unused space is minimised. Design complexity can be increased if more motifs are added.

A mirror decorated without equal reference to negative spaces was probably designed by a person operating outside of the particular production context in which the majority of the decorated mirrors were made, with incomplete knowledge or understanding of the commonly held principles of design composition. The majority of the mirrors are decorated with designs that conform to two of my analytical criteria, but not all. For example, the design on the Aston mirror minimises unused space and balances positive and negative components but it is not complex. The design on the Birdlip mirror is complex and balances negative and positive components but it also has some areas of unused space. The two mirrors that conform best to all of these criteria are the Pegsdon and Desborough mirrors.

It is not possible to chart an unbroken, evolutionary sequence of mirror design. Some of the earlier mirrors from southeast England, like Aston, have designs which conform to the design rules of mirror decoration better than later 'western' mirrors. Nor is it possible to chart a progression of designs within the south-eastern or 'western' groups. For example, the design on the Pegsdon mirror has been shown to conform almost perfectly to the design rules yet it could potentially be assigned an early date in the probable c. 75–25 BC date range (Sealey 2006). The implication of this finding is that it is not possible to use the 'quality' of mirror decoration as a method for dating a mirror. It is possible, based on decoration and morphology, to suggest that an un-provenanced mirror is probably from a particular region and therefore to assign an approximate deposition date. However, as I have shown, within regional groupings some mirror designs follow the particular design rules better than others. Rather than reflecting a chronological progression of designs, this could indicate that the knowledge of how to decorate a mirror was not homogenously distributed.

The 'Meaning' of Mirror Decoration

This paper will end with a brief consideration of the question of why were mirrors decorated? Beyond possible references to nature (e.g. Jope 2000, pl. 185) the meaning of mirror decoration has never been addressed. Mirror decoration has been interpreted as passive and merely pleasing to the eye. We cannot disengage decoration from the object and the particular social contexts in which decorated objects were made. Objects like mirrors were decorated for specific reasons, these were intimately related to the material properties of the mirror, its role within society and the particular qualities ascribed to decoration, which are socially embedded (see Campbell 2002; Coote 1992; Gell 1999).

Other than mirrors only a limited number of objects were decorated with hatched 'mirror style' motifs. Beyond the observation that it may only have been appropriate to decorate certain types of objects with these motifs, I do not think at this level the mirror style of decoration is necessarily meaningful. When the meaning of abstract Celtic Art has been considered in the past it has always been from the perspective that certain motifs, even though they appear abstract to us, must have stood for something else. What I want to argue is that the hatched motifs on mirrors do not have to represent something else; they are integral to the mirror and are vital to its efficacy. As I have shown in this paper, the cross-hatched motifs on mirror backs are arranged to form designs that conform to a set of design rules with a balance of positive and negative components. These design rules are consistently adhered to over a significant time span and across a wide geographical area. In the case of mirrors, it is the relation of the design to the artefact that is significant not the technique of decoration or the form of the motifs. The meaning of mirror decoration resides in the way mirror designs are constructed. Designs were inscribed on mirror plates, on the opposite side to the reflective surface. This location is significant as mirror design can be seen to evoke the reflective properties of the mirror, as positive motifs frame and create distorted images of themselves within the design-field: negative motifs. The effect of the decoration could be seen to be enhanced by reducing unused space in the design field. The decorated and reflective faces of the mirror plate possess a kind of 'inner logic': they metaphorically refer to one another and act to reinforce meaning. Far from being passive, mirror decoration acts to reemphasise and reinforce the primary function and most powerful property of a mirror: its ability to reflect light. The motifs used to decorate mirrors are therefore not representational of anything other than 'mirrorness'.

Acknowledgements

The data from this paper has been taken from my University of Southampton PhD thesis on the corpus of British mirrors, which was funded by the AHRC. I would like to thank Yvonne Marshall, J. D. Hill, Mansel Spratling and Julian Whitewright for helping me to decipher mirror decoration and express my ideas more coherently. I would also like to thank Richard Hobbs and Ben Roberts for reading previous drafts of this paper. All errors remain my own.

Appendix 1. Mirrors with Decorated Plates

Aston, Hertfordshire (Rook 1982)
Billericay I, Essex (Fox 1958)
Birdlip, Gloucestershire (Bellows 1881; Staelens 1982)
Bromham, Bedfordshire
Bryher, Isles of Scilly (Johns 2006)
Bulbury, Dorset (Cunliffe 1972; Cunnington 1884)
Chilham Castle, Kent (Parfitt 1998)
Colchester I (Lexden Grange) (Fox 1958)
Colchester II (Hyderabad Barracks) (Sealey 2006)
Chettle, Dorset
Desborough, Northamptonshire (Smith 1909)
Disney
Dorton, Buckinghamshire (Farley 1983)
Gibbs
Great Chesterford, Essex (Fox 1960)
Holcombe, Devon (Fox 1972; Fox and Pollard 1973)
Latchmere Green, Hampshire (Fulford and Creighton 1998)
Mayer
Mount Batten I, Devon (Spence-Bate 1871, Cunliffe 1988)
Nijmegen, The Netherlands (Dunning 1928)
Old Warden I, Bedfordshire (Spratling 1970)
Oxford
Pegsdon, Bedfordshire (Burleigh and Megaw 2007)
Portesham, Dorset (Fitzpatrick 1997)
Rickling Essex (Sealey 2006)
Rivenhall I, Essex (Lloyd-Morgan 1993; Rodwell and Rodwell 1986)
St Keverne, Cornwall (Jope-Rogers 1873)

The Verne, Portland, Dorset

Appendix 2. Glossary of Definitions

The majority of these definitions are derived from Jope (2000, 379–85) & MacGregor (1976). Where particular motifs have not been previously defined I have provided my own. I have also added to Jope and MacGregor's definitions where necessary for clarity. Where positive and negative motifs are identical I have defined only the positive motif.

Terminology

Design Field – Total surface of the mirror-back containing decoration, delimited by the edge of the mirror-plate or rim.

Motif – Areas of the design-field, of recognisable and repeated form.

Positive Motif – Motifs that have been hatched.

Negative Motif – Un-hatched motifs.

Unused Space – Any part of the design-field which is not a positive or negative motif.

Roundel – Any "…circle of some importance in itself for its decorative content or context" (Jope 2000, 383).

Design – Distinctive patterns formed by the motifs within individual design-fields.

Mirror Style – Artefacts decorated with the same hatched motifs as mirrors.

Positive Motifs

Fin – A flat, long triangular shape. The shortest two sides are different lengths and are inward curving. The longest side is convex.

Armadillo

a. Smaller circle within a larger circle. The smaller circle is positioned off-centre, its outside-edge touching the outer circle. The crescent shape created in-between the two circles.

b. The armadillo is disconnected at the point where the two circles meet producing a leading edge, which is often joined to another motif, such as a fin or cusp.

Cusp

a. Three sided motif. The two shorter sides are of equal length and are concave. The longest side is convex, creating an axe-shaped motif. The cusp differs from the fin in that the two convex sides of the motif are of equal length.
b. As above with a circular void in the centre of the motif.

Trumpet-Shape

a. A three-sided motif. Two sides are S-shaped and of equal length. The third side is concave.

b. The motif is three-sided. One side is concave, another convex and the third is S-shaped. The positive equivalent of the negative ‘trumpet void’.

c. An extreme version of b. The motif resembles a bird’s wing. It has four-sides. Two are convex, one is S-shaped and the fourth-side is almost a straight-line but tends towards concave.

Filled-Circle – An inscribed circle filled with hatching.

Whirligig – Three half-moon shapes positioned in such a way so as to resemble a ship’s propeller. “A design that creates the illusion of perpetually rotating, as when arms (of any number) seem flung out from a centre…” (Jope 2000, 385).

Circled Tricorne – *“A* curved triangle, made-up of three inward-curving arcs” Jope (2000, 384) contained within a circle. Five different types have been identified on the patterned backs of mirrors:

a. The curved triangle is hatched, delineating three empty spaces within the circle.

b. Neither the tricorne nor the three spaces are hatched.

c. The tricorne is left un-hatched but the three spaces are hatched.

c1. Identical to c except one of the curved sides of the tricorne has been removed, leaving behind an axe-shaped negative space.

d. The tricorne is filled. An extra circle very slightly larger in circumference than the original circle is inscribed outside of the circled tricorne. The small space between the two circles is hatched.

Adjoined Double Cusp

a. Two cusps joined end to end to create a circle with two circles inside. The cusps are filled with hatching leaving circular voids.
b. An adjoined double cusp with one end not fully joined allowing the motif to be linked to another motif, such as a fin.
c. An adjoined double cusp with only the centre protrusion from each cusp adjoined, allowing the motif to form the central component between two other motifs.

Hooked Fin

a. A fin which has been curved-over and broadened at the end.
b. A hooked fin with two circular voids.

Half-moon

A semi-circular moon-shaped area filled with hatching.

Kidney

Kidney-shaped motif.

Negative Motifs

Negative motifs are intentional blank spaces of coherent and repeated forms that are present on the mirror design field. Many are the same as the positive motifs.

Fin

The same definitions apply to the negative shapes as the positive.

Cusp

a. The same definitions apply to the negative shapes as the positive.
b. A cusp still with the projecting point in the centre of the shape but with the protruding edges further downwards than the central projecting point.

Trumpet-Void

The same definitions apply to the negative shapes as the positive.

Empty Circle

An inscribed circle; often formed within a positive motif such as a hooked-fin or an adjoined double cusp.

Teardrop

A motif shaped like a teardrop or an upside-down pear (see Parfitt 1995, 90).

Tricorne
"A curved triangle, made-up of three inward-curving arcs" (Jope 2000, 384).

Crescent Shapes

a. A motif in the shape of a half-moon.

b. A motif in the shape of a crescent-moon.

Stemmed Pelta
"A shape formed when two curves diverge to meet the inner side of an arc" (Jope 2000, 382).

Keeled-Roundel
"A more or less circular unit with a keel-shaped protuberance" (Jope 2000, 381). The shape looks like a hard-boiled egg, or an eye viewed from side-on. In negative form this shape is often delineated by adding an inward curving line to the end of a positive motif like a trumpet shape, cusp or a fin. A good example can be seen on the Gibbs mirror.

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6

What can be inferred from the regional stylistic diversity of Iron Age coinage?

Ian Leins

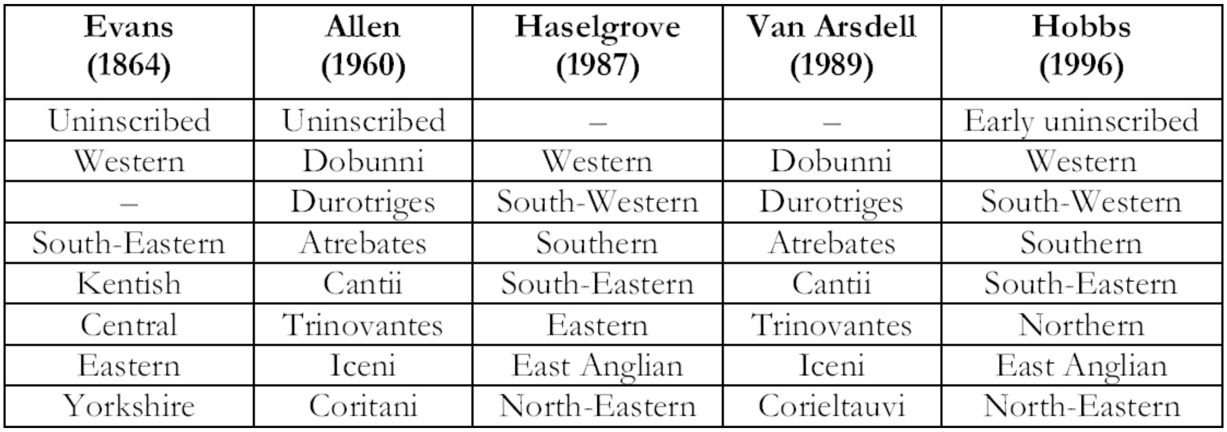
Introduction

Although coinage has continued to play a significant role in studies of late Iron Age southern Britain (see especially Creighton 2000), its classification has changed little in the last 150 years. The basic categories, into which individual coin types are sorted, primarily on the basis of their style and the distribution of findspots, are essentially the same today as those produced by Sir John Evans in 1864. Associated with this inherited typological framework is a belief that the stylistic differences between coins produced in different parts of the country reflect the most significant social, political and ethnic divisions of the period. However, recent studies have shown that the relationship between coinage style, distribution and socio-political organisation is much more complex than is often thought, with types that are classified together on the basis of stylistic similarities exhibiting very different distributions. This paper examines coin distributions at a number of different levels in order to determine the relative significance of the regional diversity of Iron Age coinage and of other identified patterns within the data.

The development of a numismatic classification

The overall development of British Iron Age coinage is now well understood, with the imported continental gold series that Allen labelled *Gallo-Belgic A–F* recognised as the earliest coins to circulate in this country (Allen 1960; see Burnett 1995 on the possible insular production of some types). These types were clearly derived from gold staters of Philip II of Macedon and in turn gave their designs to the earliest insular British products (Allen's *British A–R)*. As the use of coinage spread through southern Britain new coinages emerged that were characterised by regional differences in style and localised distributions. From the mid first century BC coins were also being struck in silver and later, in eastern England at least, in bronze. By the early first century AD most of these regional coinages had begun to include inscriptions and those in the south-east had adopted Classical style designs.

All of the major typologies, from Evans until the present day, reflect this development and in particular the significance of regional difference in style and distribution. The categories into which British Iron Age coinage has been organised are remarkably consistent in recognising seven regional groupings (see Table 6.1). In fact, nomenclature aside, it is only the treatment of the earliest uninscribed coinages that differs between these approaches to classification. Evans (1864), Allen (1944; 1960) and Hobbs (1996) all chose to treat the earliest uninscribed coinage separately, feeling that they could not easily be reconciled with any of the later regional groupings. In contrast, Haselgrove (1987) and Van Arsdell (1989) considered early uninscribed types together with the regional group with which they could be most readily identified.



Evans (1864)	**Allen (1960)**	**Haselgrove (1987)**	**Van Arsdell (1989)**	**Hobbs (1996)**
Uninscribed	Uninscribed	–	–	Early uninscribed
Western	Dobunni	Western	Dobunni	Western
–	Durotriges	South-Western	Durotriges	South-Western
South-Eastern	Atrebates	Southern	Atrebates	Southern
Kentish	Cantii	South-Eastern	Cantii	South-Eastern
Central	Trinovantes	Eastern	Trinovantes	Northern
Eastern	Iceni	East Anglian	Iceni	East Anglian
Yorkshire	Coritani	North-Eastern	Corieltauvi	North-Eastern

Table 6.1. Structure of major numismatic typologies

The aforementioned differences of nomenclature are closely related to the continuing debate over the degree to which regional patterns in the style of coins can be seen as an indicator of socio-political organisation. In

1864 Sir John Evans chose a neutral geographical terminology to describe his regional coinages so as to avoid the assumption that they could be directly linked with socio-political groups. Derek Allen, however, in crucial papers published in 1944 and 1960, argued that the distributions of these later regional coinages neatly reflected the Roman *civitates* as described by Ptolemy in the second century AD, suggesting that the administrative organisation of the Roman province was based on the social and political divisions of the pre-Roman period. In this way each of the regional coinages came to be seen and described in 'tribal' terms (e.g. *Western coinage* became *Dobunnic coinage)*.

Allen's backward projection of the Roman *civitates* divisions into the pre-Roman period was, however, much less straightforward than is often recognised. In addition to littering his tribal map with question marks that indicated areas of uncertainty (Figure 6.1), he stated that the areas described as 'tribes' were "no doubt loose confederacies of smaller tribal units, some of whose names, recorded in Caesar, do not appear thereafter" (Allen 1944, 2–3). Allen also thought it unwise to attribute the earliest uninscribed coinages to 'tribes' in the same manner, feeling that their distributions were less clear cut that those of later types. Instead he allowed their ambiguity to attest a degree of social change in the period between the invasions of Caesar and Claudius. Allen was also correct to highlight the recently neglected evidence of Caesar's *de bello Gallico* (5.20–21), which records the names of six British *civitates*, five of which are not mentioned by Ptolemy.

During the 1980s both Haselgrove and Van Arsdell found ways of assimilating the whole of British Iron Age coinage into regional series. Haselgrove abandoned the use of tribal names, allowing both early uninscribed and later issues to be attributed to regional groups based purely on their style, the distribution of findspots and their appearance in hoards. He explicitly avoided the assumption that each series revealed continuity of production place, production authority or the existence of any static or cohesive sociopolitical units. Van Arsdell achieved the same goal, but following a very different methodology. By assuming that the sociopolitical organisation of Britain was unlikely to have changed significantly from the first century BC to the first century AD, he could attribute earlier uninscribed coin types to the same 'tribes' that Allen had associated with the later regional coinages on a 'best-fit' basis. For Van

Arsdell both uninscribed and inscribed types could be placed into sequences and interpreted as the consecutive issues of the tribal rulers. This approach, which echoed earlier work by Mack (1953), obscured the uncertainties that had been apparent in Allen's tribal map and organisation of the coinage.

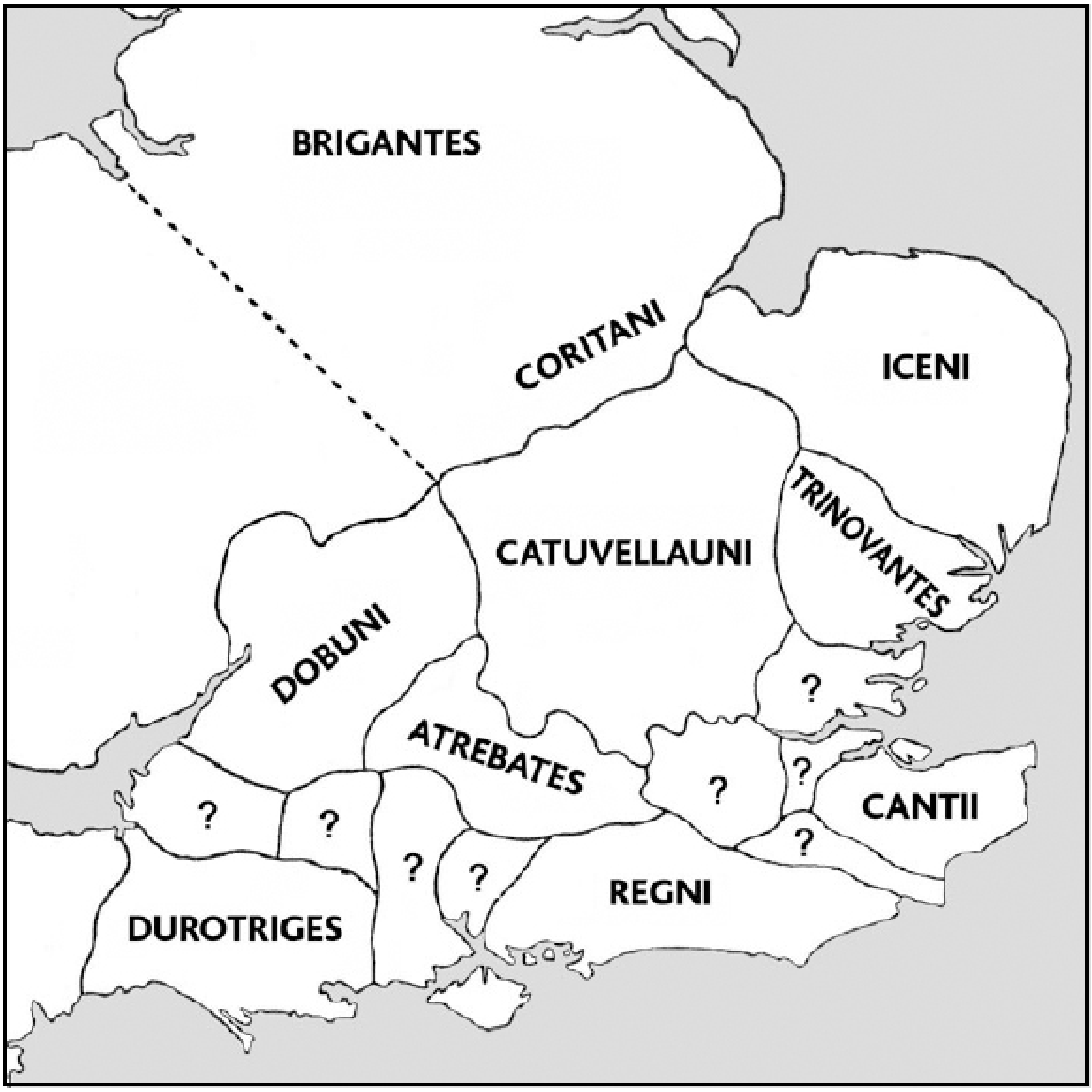

BRIGANTES
CORITANI
ICENI
TRINOVANTES
CATUVELLAUNI
DOBUNI
?
ATREBATES
?
?
CANTII
?
?
?
?
?
REGNI
DUROTRIGES

Figure 6.1. Map of the Iron Age 'tribes' of Britain based on coin distributions (After Allen 1944)

Implications for interpretation

All of the classifications outlined above divide the corpus of Iron Age coinage into one of seven or eight basic categories. Any individual coin type, therefore, can be placed within a coherent stylistic group and understood within the broader development of British coinage. These regional groupings predetermine the nature and significance of any relationships that exist between a particular type and the rest of Iron Age coinage. Once a coin type is identified as belonging to the *North-Eastern/Corieltavian* series, for example, it is usually subsumed within the 'gross-plot' of that regional coinage in any distribution maps and the significance of its precise distribution is rarely reconsidered. In fact it is fairly unusual to see a map that displays coins at any level other than that of the 'regional' or 'tribal' series outside of specialist numismatic studies. Even these are almost invariably maps of the coinage of a particular named ruler used to demonstrate his political domain. In addition to obscuring the possible significance of smaller scale patterns in coin distributions, the focus on 'regional' or 'tribal' series has meant that potentially interesting iconographic links that cross-cut the different regional series have been ignored.

The emphasis placed on regional distinctions in style by our typologies has also served to prevent coinage being fully separated from the 'tribal model' of Iron Age society. While the belief in the 'tribe' as a significant division of society has been questioned by many archaeologists, it is alive and well in at least one school of Iron Age numismatics. The problem stems from the fact that the very existence of the 'tribes' (as Iron Age entities) is based to a large degree on the evidence of the distribution of regionally distinctive coinages. Even if tribal names are removed from the debate (as by Haselgrove), there remain in the distributions 'tribal-sized and shaped' entities that require explanation. Neither the question of how significant these patterns really are, nor what they might reveal has been adequately tackled.

However, it is now becoming clear that when these 'regional' or 'tribal' coinages coins are broken down into their composite parts, and analysed at a variety of different levels, they appear less coherent than is often thought. Smaller scale patterns within the numismatic evidence have the potential to undermine the importance of these larger groupings. The remainder of this paper can be seen more or less as a series of case studies that reveal some of the problems associated with current approaches to the analysis of coin distributions. These studies will offer alternative interpretations of the significance of the regional diversity of coinage and highlight new patterns emerging in the data that allow the numismatic evidence to be integrated with the 'non-tribal' models of society that are becoming common in other areas of Iron Age studies (e.g. Hill 2006).

Distributions and chronological variation

The most familiar coin distribution maps are the simple gross-plot distributions of each 'regional' or 'tribal' series (e.g. Cunliffe 2005, 160–198). These represent amalgamations of all types that have been identified as belonging to a group on the basis of style and distribution, which are in many cases then associated with a 'tribe'. A map of *East Anglian/Icenian* coinage, therefore, will comprise coins that range from early uninscribed types of Haselgrove's *phases 5–6 (circa* 60–20 BC), to inscribed types struck at the time of, or shortly after, the Roman conquest of Britain in AD 43 (Haselgrove *phase* 9, *circa* AD 30–60). Within such a distribution, therefore, are coins produced over a period of approximately one hundred years. This has the effect of suggesting that the boundaries of coin distributions, whatever they may reveal, remained static throughout this entire period. When coin distributions are subjected to socio-political interpretations, this implies that the 'tribal' boundaries did not change in a century.

This assumption can be easily tested. Figures 6.2a-b show the distribution of coins ascribed to the *Western / Dobunnic, Southern/Atrebatic* and *Eastern/Trinovantes* series, across a fairly arbitrary region of South Oxfordshire, north-west of the confluence of the Thames and Kennet, where their distributions appear to merge. The two maps reflect a crude distinction between earlier uninscribed (Fig. 6.2a) and later inscribed coinages (Fig. 6.2b). Although the introduction of writing impacted these different series at different times, the analysis nonetheless provides a rough separation of coinage struck in the mid to late first century BC from those of the late first century BC to mid first century AD. This adds a degree of time-depth to our analysis.

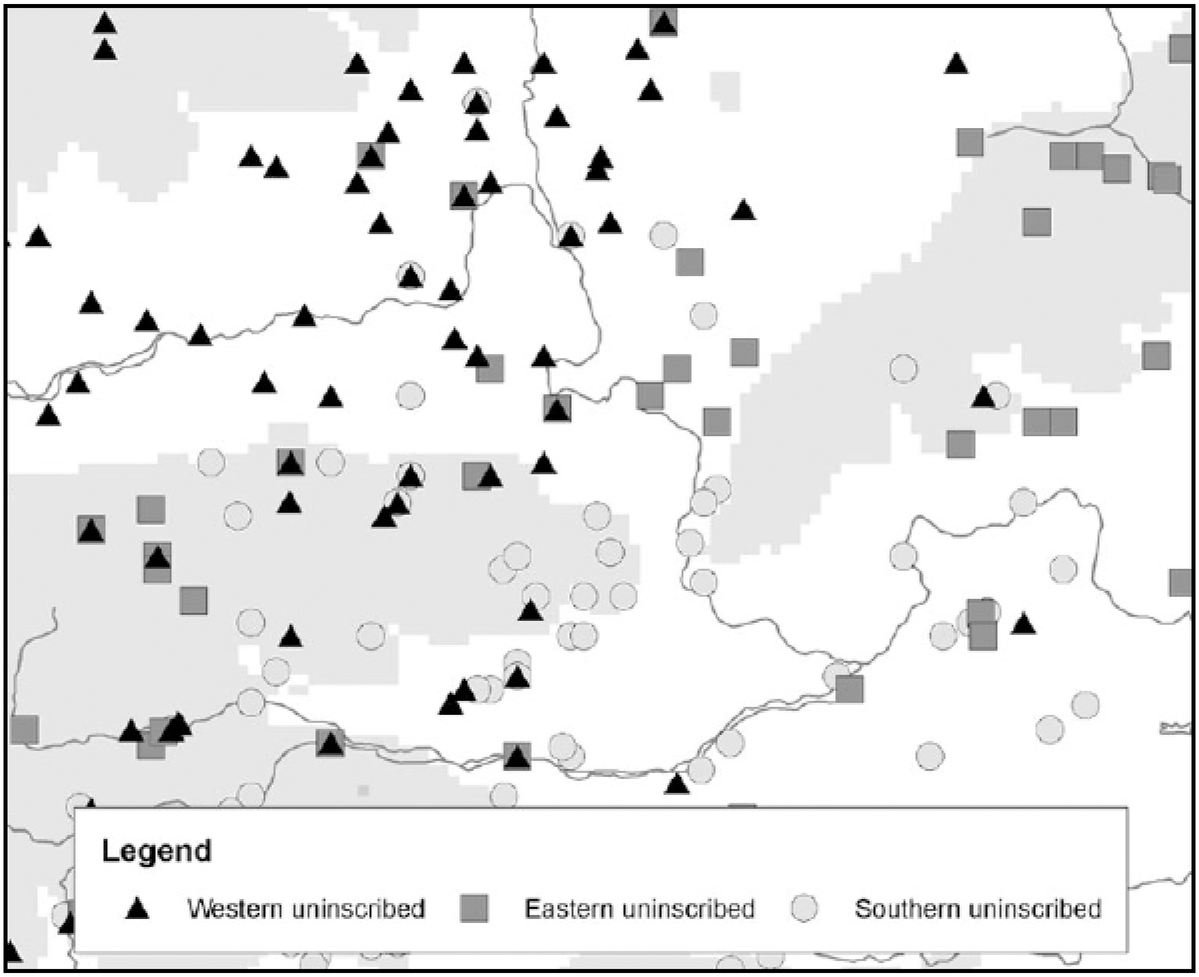

Legend
▲ Western uninscribed
■ Eastern uninscribed
○ Southern uninscribed

Figure 6.2a. The distribution of uninscribed coins ascribed to the Western, Southern and Eastern series (in South Oxfordshire)

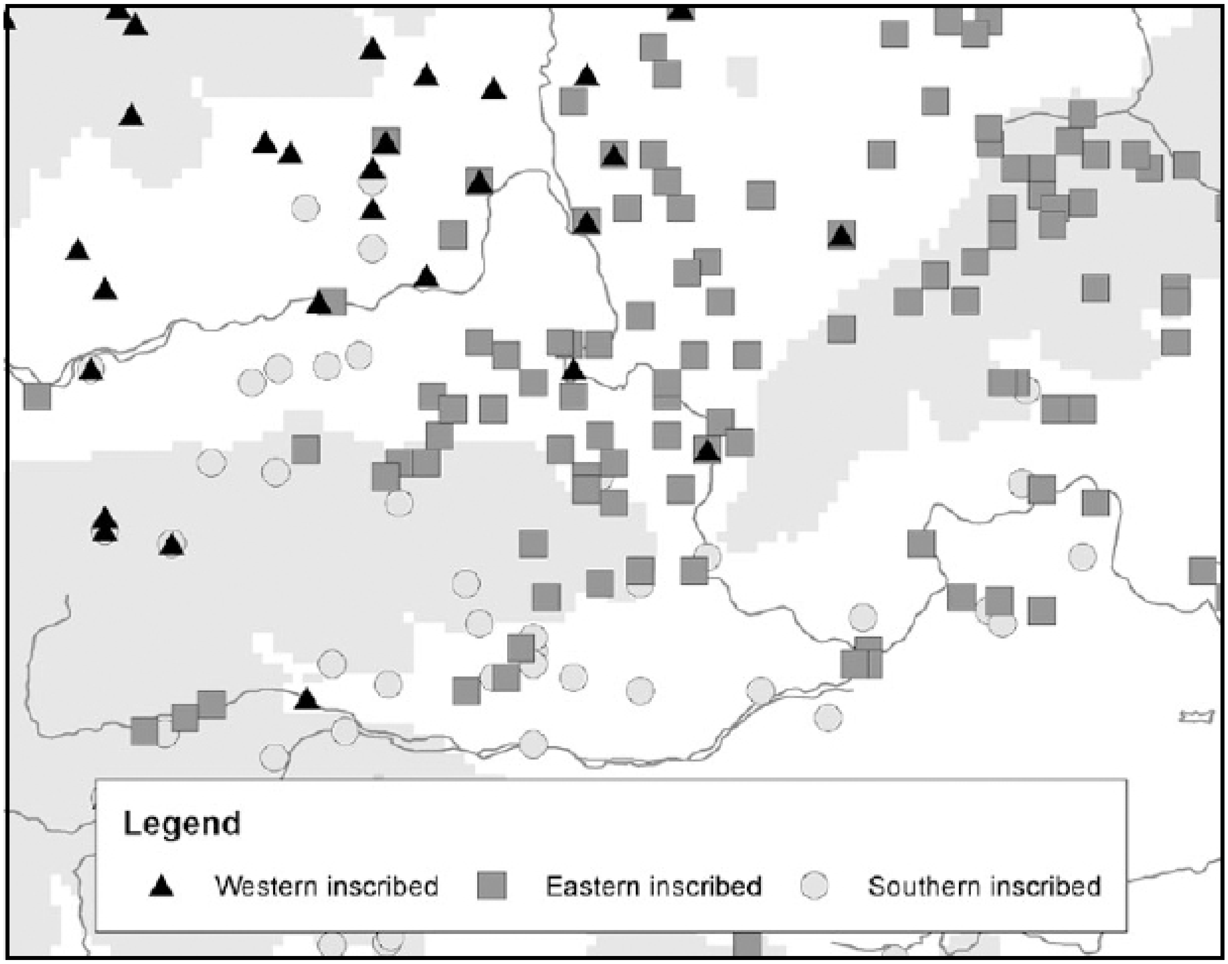


Figure 6.2b. The distribution of inscribed coins ascribed to the Western, Southern and Eastern series (in South Oxfordshire)

The maps highlight the fluid nature of the boundary between the distributions of coin types attributed to each of the three series through time. *Western* coinage appears to have been restricted to the far north-west of this area in the later period, whereas in the earlier period it seems to have overlapped more with the *Southern* series. The east of the area exhibits few coins of early date, but a large number of *Eastern* types in the later period, when they also extend into areas previously dominated by *Southern* types. While the significance attached to this shift depends on the types of relationship that we think are revealed by coin distributions, it does at least make it clear that we must view these boundaries as fluid rather than static.

Classification, distribution and meaning

Examining distributions at a different level, looking at distinctive sub-groups within an overall regional series, is also instructive. Allen's *British Q* coinage includes a number of different types united by the obvious similarity of their designs. The coinage includes coins of at least two denominations, QA (Appendix no. 2) and QB (Appendix no. 3) staters and QC quarter staters (Appendix nos 4 and 5 illustrate QC varieties VA220 and 228). These types are all derived from *Gallo-Belgic F* (Appendix no. 1), featuring its distinctive triple-tailed horse design, and directly influence the first inscribed *Southern/Atrebatic* coins of Commios and all *Western/Dobunnic* gold coins. As such, *British Q* is considered one of the most influential stages in the development of the British series. All *British Q* types belong to Haselgrove's *phases 5–6 (circa* 60–20 BC). Although variously described as *Southern* by Haselgrove and *Atrebatic* by Van Arsdell, the stylistic links within *British Q* coinage are so persuasive that the coherence of its constituent types as a single group has rarely been doubted. The typological divisions of both Van Arsdell and Haselgrove, more or less explicitly, imply a relationship between the production of *British Q*, other uninscribed *Southern/Atrebatic* types and the later coins of Commios, Tincomarus, Eppillus and Verica.

The Celtic Coin Index includes 454 provenanced *British Q* (65 QA, 106 QB and 283 QC). The following analysis of this dataset serves to highlight the complexity of the relationship between their style, distribution and assumptions made about their production. Figure 6.3a compares the distribution of the entire *British Q* coinage with later inscribed types of the *Southern/Atrebatic* series. The map appears to provide justification for the decisions of both Mack (1953) and Van Arsdell (1989) to ascribe *British Q* to the *Atrebates*. Its distribution is fairly consistent with the main concentration of later inscribed coins of Commios and his successors Tincomarus, Eppillus and Verica, who are traditionally seen as dynastic rulers of the *Atrebates*.

The coherence of *British Q* as a group and the association of its distribution with that of the later inscribed coinage are less clear cut when analysed on a different level. Figure 6.3b shows a separation of QA and QB staters, which are distinguished only by the development of a blank obverse (QB) from a wreath design (QA). Their distributions show considerable variation, with QA concentrated in Hampshire, Berkshire and

Surrey and QB in Hampshire, Wiltshire and Gloucestershire. As QB types gave rise to *British R*, the progenitor of later *Western/Dobunnic* inscribed gold, we ought not to be surprised by its westerly distribution. What this highlights, however, is that two coin types of almost identical style, which are clearly linked by the technologies involved in their production, can exhibit dramatically different distributions. On the basis of these distribution maps and the approach of attributing coins to 'tribes', QB would perhaps be more accurately labelled *Dobunnic*, rather than grouped with QA on stylistic grounds and labelled *Atrebatic*.

Similar inconsistencies are revealed if we examine the distribution of QC quarter staters. Figure 6.3c shows the distribution of all QC coins, while Figure 6.3d reveals several of its constituent types (Van Arsdell 220, 224, 228 and 246) chosen to demonstrate the extreme variations obscured by plotting all QCs, or even all *British Q* types as a single group.

All *British Q* types can be clearly linked on the basis of style and production technologies, explaining why they are considered together in all current typological frameworks. Their distributions, however, suggest that there are serious problems in viewing them as a single circulating coinage or as the product of a coherent sociopolitical authority. If this were the case, the authority concerned would have covered an area equivalent to seven or eight modern counties (in the 50s BC). Not only is the existence of such large scale socio-political entities difficult to reconcile with the archaeological evidence, but it now appears to be at odds with the numismatic evidence as analysed at a different level. These problems are clearly related to an important question of interpretation: What can we infer from the distribution of a stylistically related series of coins or from the distribution of an individual type?

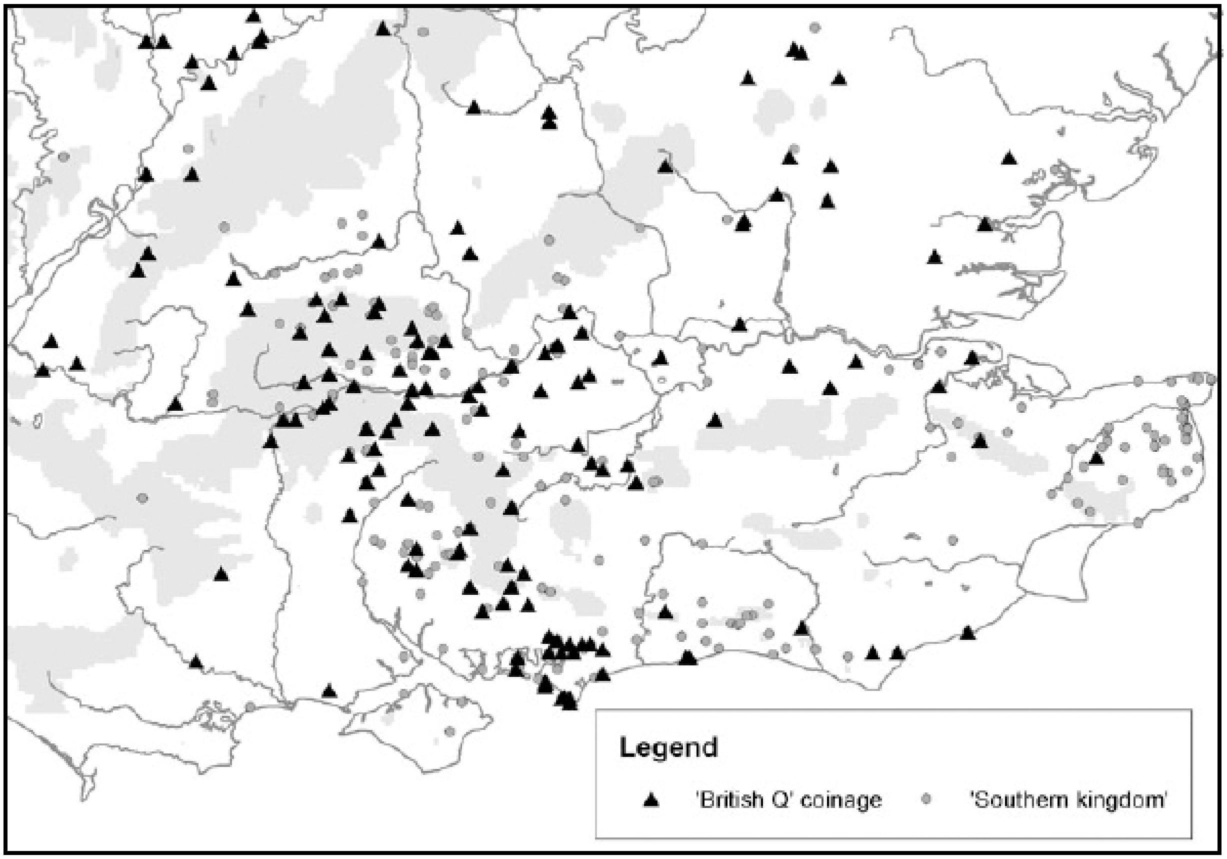

Legend
▲ 'British Q' coinage
● 'Southern kingdom'

Figure 6.3a. The distribution of British Q coinage (compared with later inscribed types of rulers associated with the Southern 'kingdom' or Atrebates)

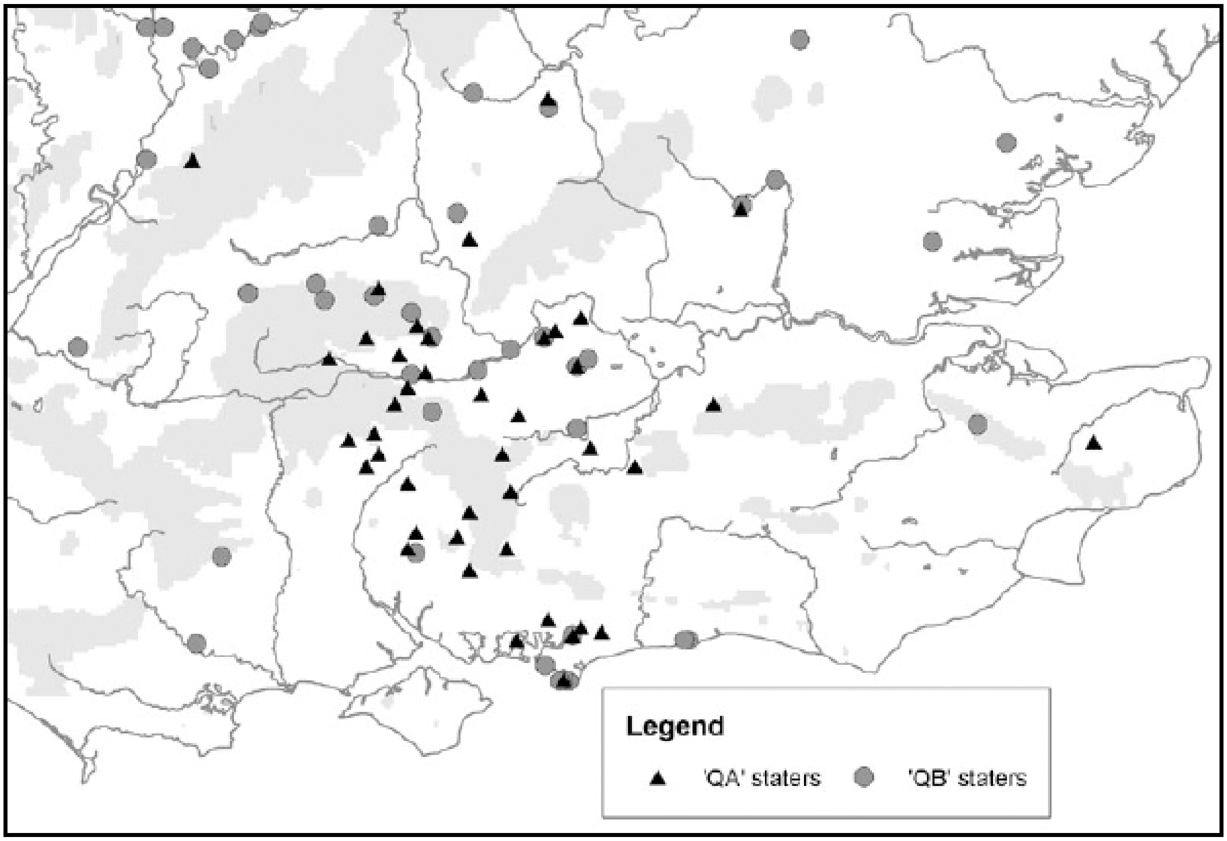

Legend
▲ 'QA' staters
● 'QB' staters

Figure 6.3b. Variation in the distribution of QA and QB type staters

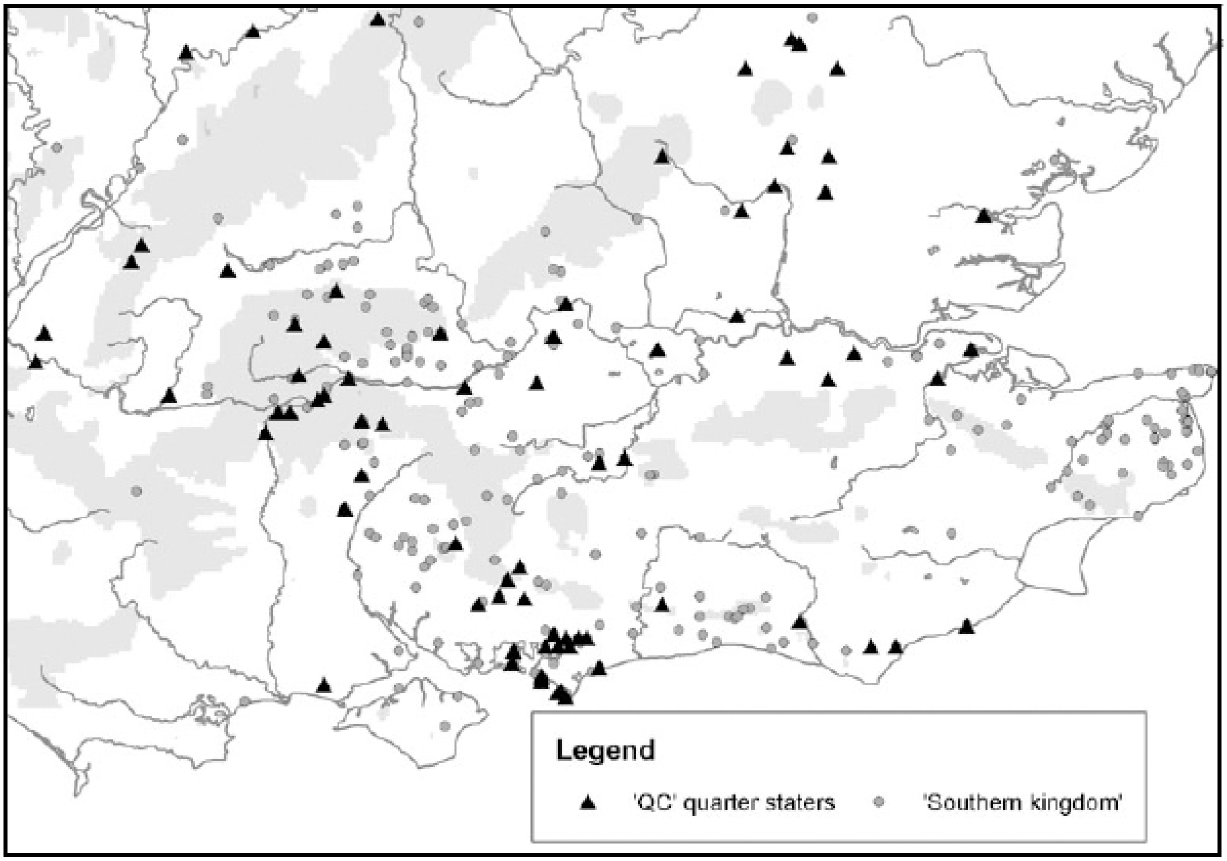

Legend
▲ 'QC' quarter staters
● 'Southern kingdom'

Figure 6.3c. The distribution of QC quarter staters (compared with later inscribed types of rulers associated with the Southern 'kingdom' or Atrebates)

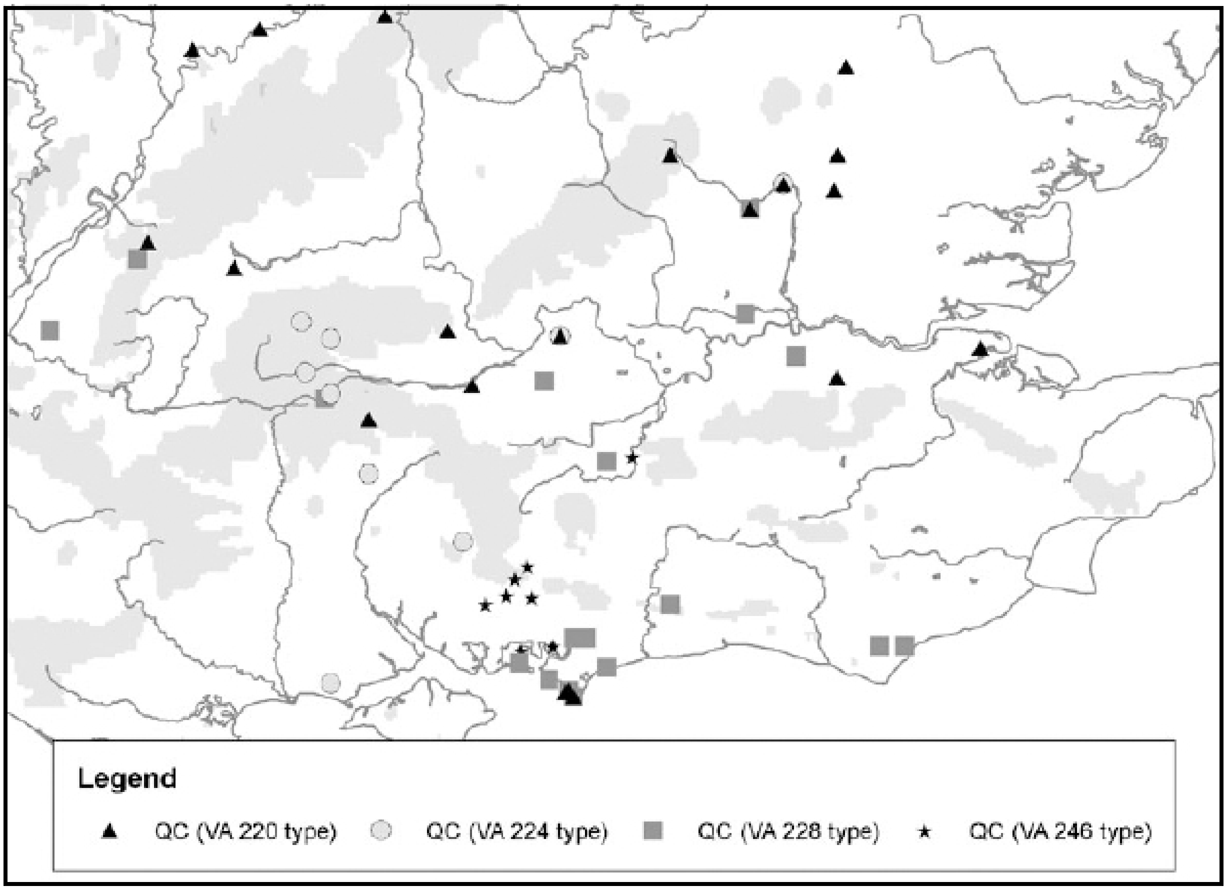


Figure 6.3d. Variations in the distribution of four different QC varieties (VA220, 224, 228 and 246)

The kind of stylistic links exhibited, say, between different *British Q* types, or between these and *Western* gold or even *Gallo-Belgic* types serve as an indicator of the continuity of production technologies and possibly of craftsmanship. It is, however, only the belief in centralised 'tribal' societies that leads us to believe that this production was necessarily controlled by a king or tribal authority. The small scale and often dramatically contrasting distributions of an individual type have also been shown to be instructive. How can these be explained and reconciled with one another? Do we believe that coins were produced by a centralised tribal authority and sent en masse to a particular community where they circulated and were eventually deposited? Or, is it equally possible that they were issued by a localised community, for local use, but drew upon the standard technology (dies) and chosen iconography of the craftsmen available to them? Either way both the broader and localised distributions are significant as potential indicators of social contacts, but neither can be assumed to relate directly to a meaningful political entity.

Distributional variation and Western coinages

While the above example is concerned with an early uninscribed coinage that is slightly ambiguous in terms of both its classification and distribution, the following case study focuses on a number of later inscribed types of the *Western/Dobunnic* series that are often considered to form part of a straightforwardly ‘tribal’ or ‘dynastic’ coinage (Van Arsdell 1989, 272ff). Although the irregularity of the distributions of gold staters inscribed BODVOC (Appendix no. 6) and CORIO (Appendix no. 7) has been noted by Allen (1961, 87–90), Sellwood (1984, 196–200) and Haselgrove (1993, 57), the significance of this observation has been completely ignored by those who refuse to believe that the area of the later Roman *Civitas Dobunnorum* may not have been a coherent socio-political entity in the late Iron Age.

The weights and designs of these types do not suggest an obvious production sequence, suggesting the possibility that they are perhaps contemporary issues of Haselgrove’s *phase 8 (circa* AD 10–40). Adherents of the ‘tribal coinage’ model, however, still seek to establish a linear sequence for their production, based on little more than the assumption that they are most likely to represent the consecutive issues of the successive rulers of the *Dobunni*. The failure of numismatists to fully expunge the influence of the ‘tribal model’, therefore, has prevented the acceptance of such an obvious pattern within the data and its use in the interpretation of either coin production or Iron Age societies.

Figure 6.4a updates the above studies of the coinages of BODVOC and CORIO based on an expanded dataset from the Celtic Coin Index. Also included are issues of CATTI (Appendix no. 8). The distributions are clearly far from consistent with one another: BODVOC coins can now be shown to be concentrated to the east (east of the Severn and north of the Avon), CORIO to the west (both sides of the Severn Estuary, in Wales and Somerset) and CATTI similarly to the west. Based on a political reading of coin distributions these maps support the possibility that they may have been contemporary issues *and* allow doubt to be expressed over the supposed socio-political unity of this area during the pre-conquest and conquest period. As in the study of *British Q*, strong stylistic links suggests social contacts and cooperation in coin production, in this case across the whole *Western* area, but individual distributions reveal smaller and possibly significant social or political relationships.

In the current example, however, we can take the interpretation of these smaller distributions further as the coins concerned are inscribed. The majority of coin inscriptions are interpreted, probably correctly, as personal names (although this should not be taken as given). As such Bodvoc[…], Corio[…] and Catti[…] can be assumed to have been influential individuals in this area during the late pre-conquest and/or conquest period. The distribution of their coins is likely to reflect, in some way, the limits of their influence. Thus the distribution of Bodvoc's coins can be seen to represent the area over which he exercised, or sought to exercise his influence. The coins of all three of these rulers, together with others (those of ANTED, EISV and COMVX) can be related to one another in terms of their style and production. Again, it is difficult to assess whether these broader links are indicative of larger political relationships and structures, or simply a reflection of a reliance on the same craftsmen and hence indicative only of broader social contacts.

It is also now clear that the split coin distributions within this region, which was thought to be united by its coinage, can also be traced back into an earlier period. While Haselgrove has already hinted at the 'minor typological and compositional differences' within the earlier uninscribed silver of this area (Haselgrove 1993, 47), the distribution of *Western* 'I–J' types (Figure 6.4b) clearly shows how this coinage also appears to have circulated within only a part of the wider territory that is characterised by finds of *Western/Dobunnic* coinage. The failure of coins to reveal a socio-politically coherent *Dobunni* in the late Iron Age is entirely consistent with Moore's recent analysis of the archaeological record of this part of the world (Moore 2006).

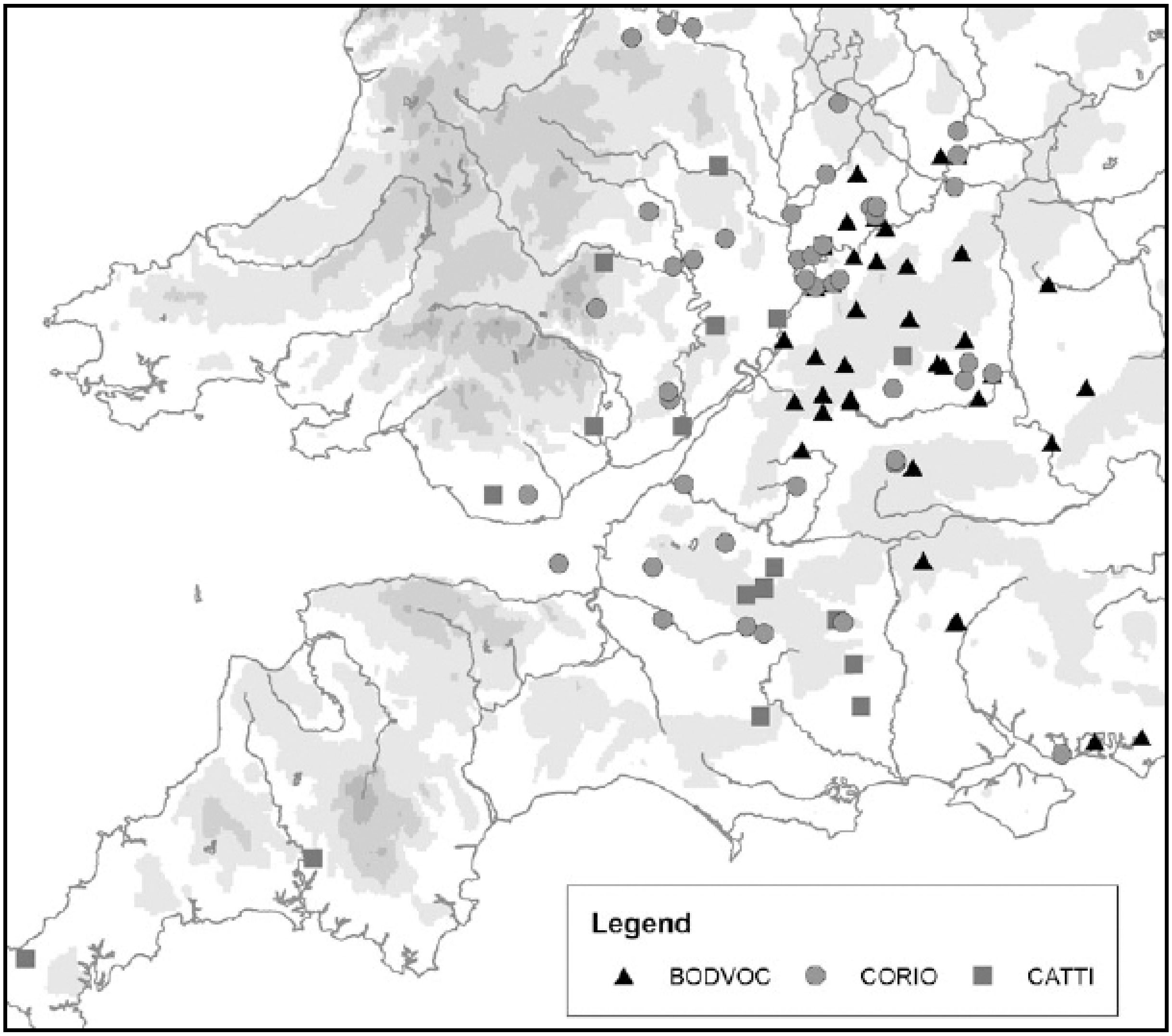

Legend
▲ BODVOC
● CORIO
■ CATTI

Figure 6.4a. The distribution of Western/Dobunnic series coins inscribed BODVOC, CORIO and CATTI showing distributional variations within the series

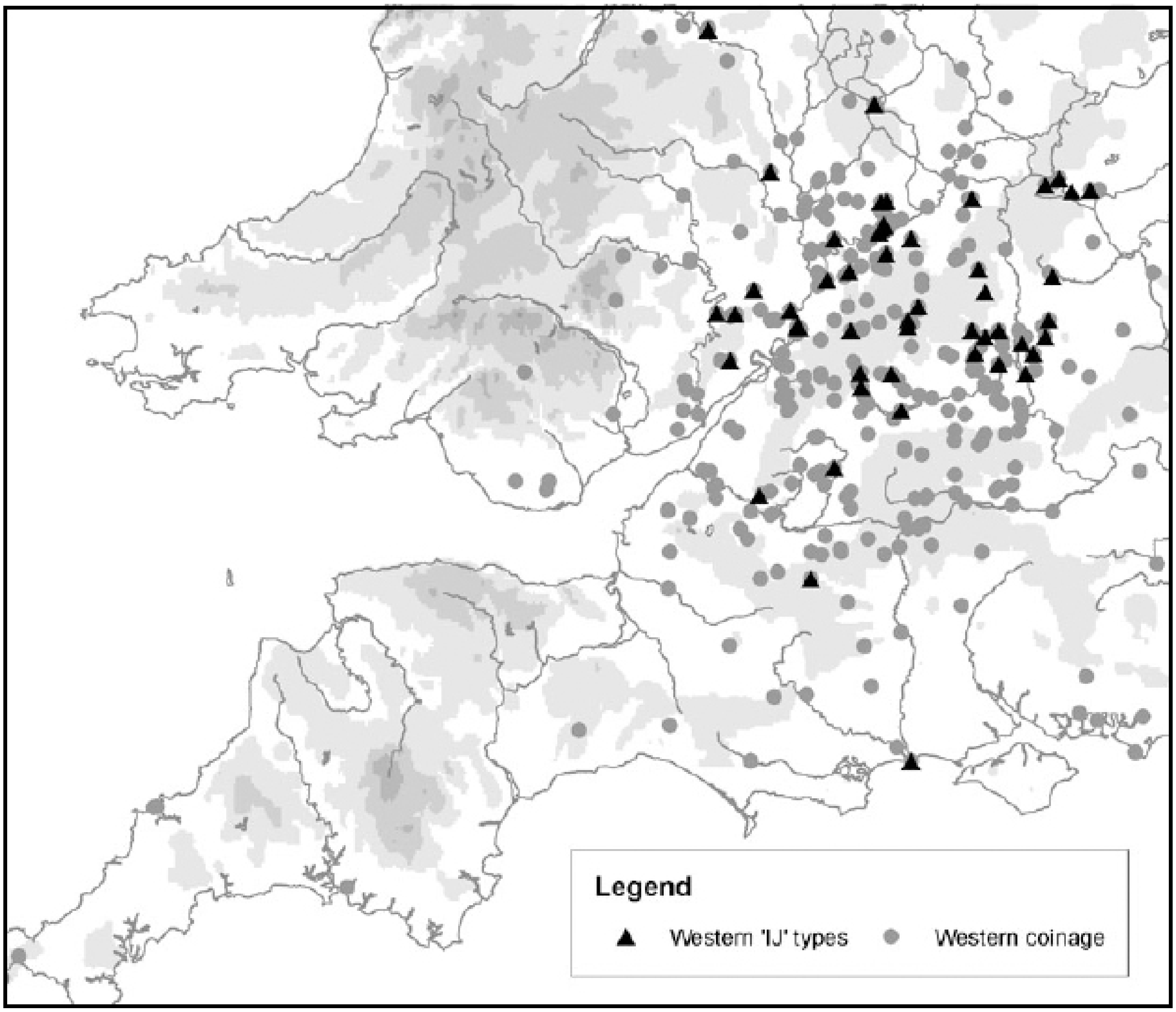


Figure 6.4b. The distribution of Western I–J uninscribed silver (compared with the Western/Dobunnic series as a whole)

Interregional links?

So far the case studies presented have been included to demonstrate how, when analysed at different levels, coins with strong stylistic links may also reveal significant smaller scale distribution patterns. The purpose has been to suggest that the emphasis on regional stylistic groupings may obscure other significant relationships revealed by the distribution of individual types. The following discussion will also question the problems of this emphasis on regional classification groups, but this time by highlighting some of the potentially significant but rarely studied broader links that cut across two or more of the ‘regional’ or ‘tribal’ series.

By way of a precursor to this discussion, it is interesting to stress the simple but commonly overlooked point that British Iron Age coinage demonstrates an extraordinary degree of conservatism. With the exception of the Roman influenced coinage of the *Eastern* and *Southern* ‘kingdoms’, produced during the first half of the first century AD (see Creighton 2000; Williams 2005), the vast majority of British products are characterised by one of four basic subjects. Reverses almost invariably depict a horse, while obverse designs tend to be based on either a head or wreath (which is often fairly abstract) or a boar. Inscriptions, monograms and simple geometric patterns also feature prominently. The distribution of coins reflecting particular choices within this limited iconographic repertoire has not really been studied.

Perhaps the most obvious example is the use of the boar, which is often shown together with a horse. Boars are fairly common features of continental Iron Age coin design, appearing as the main design (DT 153; 442, etc.) and as an additional features around the main design (DT 2236, 2428, 2605, etc.). The boar is also a frequent subject of British coinage, as well as famously forming part of the design on the Witham shield. On coins it appears on a limited number of types ascribed to the *South-Eastern/Cantii* series (BM 2487, 2509, 2516, etc.) and the *Southern/Atrebatic* series (BM 577, etc.). These types are all clearly influenced by continental *Belgic* and *Armorican* prototypes. Most significantly, however, the boar features on coins of the *North-Eastern/Corieltavian* and *East Anglian/Icenian* series.

In both of these regions the boar is most commonly depicted on the obverse of the coin and coupled with a horse on the reverse. Furthermore, both the *East Anglian* (BM 3440, Appendix no. 9) and the *North-Eastern* (BM 3194, Appendix no. 10) types may be derived from the same prototype, a Roman *denarius* of C Hosidius Geta issued in 68 BC (RRC 407), as both types sometimes show the boar wounded by a spear. In the *North-Eastern* series the boar appears only on this coinage, while in East Anglia the possibility that the familiar image of the ‘Norfolk wolf’ on gold staters is in fact a boar should be considered (J. Williams, *pers*. comm.). Comparison of the remarkable similarity of the animals represented on BM 3205 and 218 makes this clear (Appendix nos 11 and 12). Together these pieces of evidence suggest that the boar may have been a motif of particular significance in parts of Norfolk, Lincolnshire and Yorkshire.

The distribution of the *North-Eastern* and *East Anglian* boar/horse coinages indicate that there was very little overlap in their circulations (Figure 6.5), suggesting that they were not intended to be interchangeable or to circulate together. They did not, however, develop completely independently from one another, as in addition to the links between the boar design itself, the horse on the reverse of the *North-Eastern* type shows obvious links to many *East Anglian* types including the 'Bury A' type (BM 3424). This raises the now familiar question as to how we should interpret similarities of coin design that are not necessarily reflected in the evidence of findspot distributions. The answer to this question probably lies again in the complexity of the social networks though which individual communities were in contact.

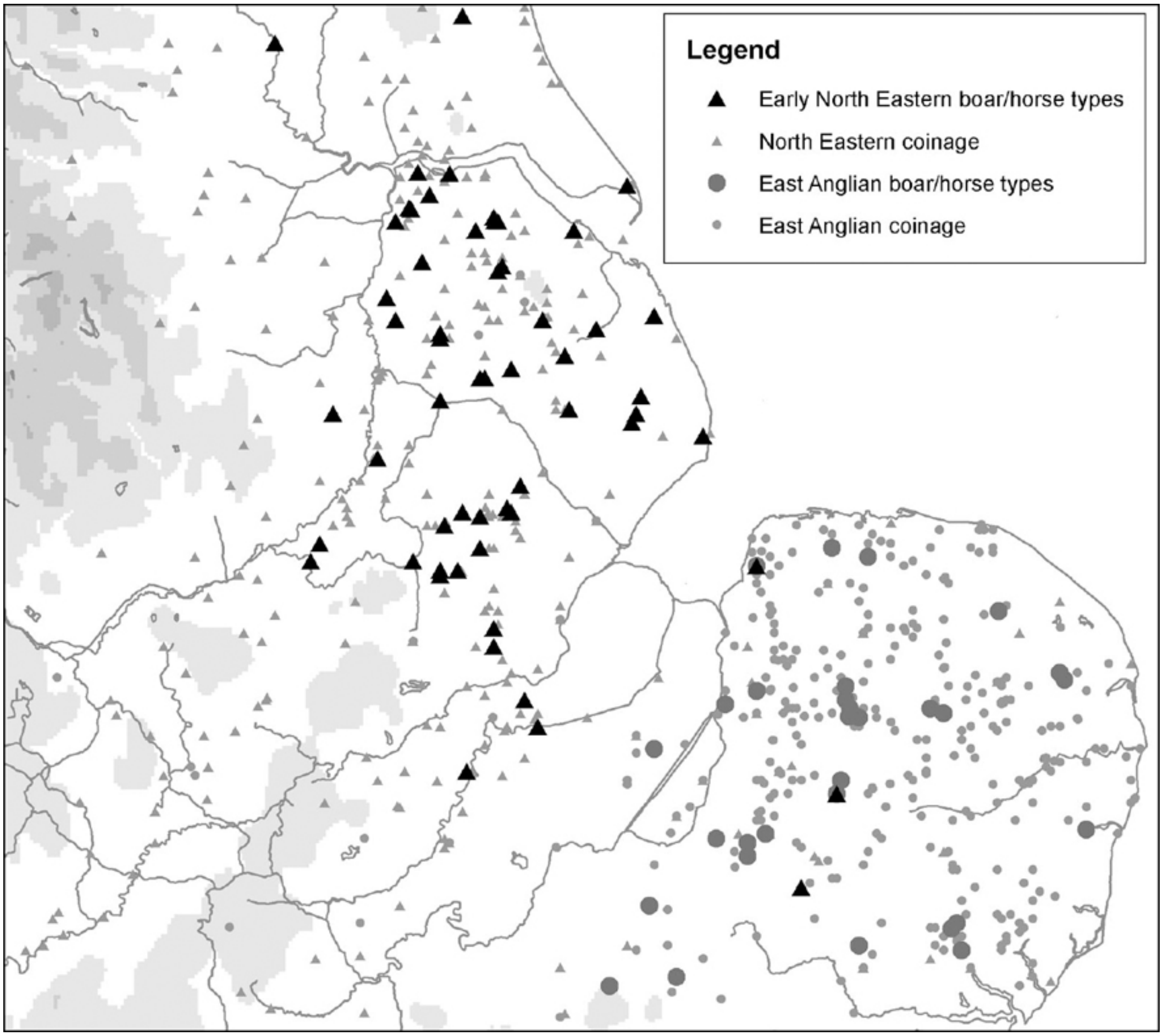

Legend
▲ Early North Eastern boar/horse types
▲ North Eastern coinage
● East Anglian boar/horse types
● East Anglian coinage

Figure 6.5. The distribution of North-Eastern and East Anglian boar/horse types (the smaller symbols represent the distribution of all coins in each regional series)

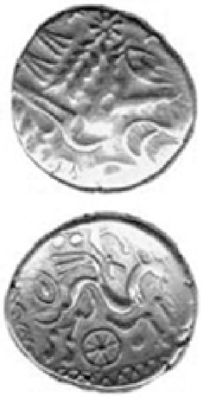
While the nature of the social contacts revealed by coin distributions is as yet unclear, they might perhaps attest the kinds of movements of people proposed by Hill (Hill 2007, 22–24). He has suggested that people were likely to have been regularly moving between different territories to exploit specialist or seasonal resources, or for reasons of exchange, marriage or for religious and social gatherings. If this was the case it should not surprise us if significant motifs or symbols were valued in two neighbouring territories or if craftsmen and artistic ideas moved between them. Another look at Figure 6.5 suggests that the territories through which the two boar/horse coinages circulated are likely to have been linked rather than separated by the Wash. Once we consider the likely Iron Age coastlines of this area, the Wash would have formed the most direct communication route between the two areas. In this light, the distribution of coins with the boar image look rather more closely related. Whatever the nature of the links behind the appearance of boar/horse designs on these two regional series, they should be seen as no less significant than the relationship between regional styles, around which complex political narratives have been constructed.

Conclusions

The emphasis placed on regional patterns within the coinage by our typological systems has structured and constrained the ways in which numismatic data has been used in the broader field of Iron Age studies. Although Allen, Haselgrove and others have shown that regional coinages cannot always be seen to be coherent groups, coinage has continued to be studied within this framework. At the heart of this problem is the fact that numismatics has failed to completely separate itself from ‘tribal’ interpretations of Iron Age society. Distributions of regional coinages have traditionally played a major role in the backward projection of the Roman *civitates* into the pre-Roman period and are one of the few props on which those who seek to defend the significance of the ‘tribe’ can rely. Even when tribal names are removed from the equation, tribal sized entities remain within the distribution patterns and require explanation. However, it has now become clear that smaller scale patterns can also be identified within the same dataset. The deconstruction of the assumed significance of the regional groups is a necessary precursor to the effective interpretation of these patterns and the construction of a new set of approaches to Iron Age coinage.

While it is beyond the scope of this paper to offer any coherent new approach to the interpretation of coin distributions, I hope to have drawn from a much broader research project a number of case studies that highlight the potential of the evidence to be used in other ways. These case studies reveal many of the inconsistencies implicit in current approaches and the benefits of examining coin distributions at a number of different levels. Regional patterns, therefore, can be combined with larger and smaller scale patterns to reveal something of the complexity of the social and political networks into which coin-using societies were plugged. While the meaning and significance of the regional patterns cannot be ignored, neither should smaller scale patterns, not least because these appear more easily reconcilable with the archaeological record and recent models of Iron Age societies.

Appendix 6.1. Coins referred to in the paper (scale 1:1)



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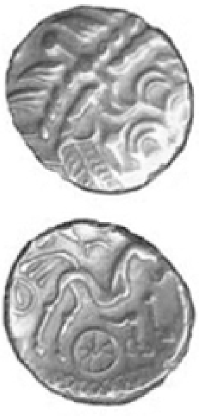

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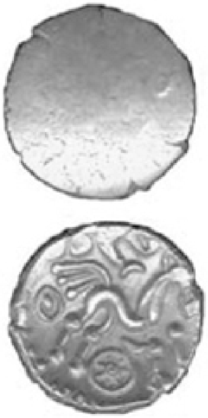

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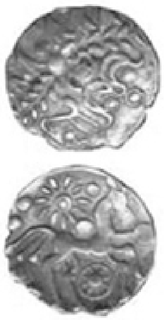

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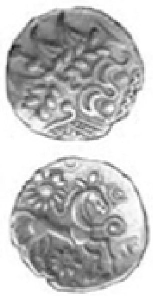

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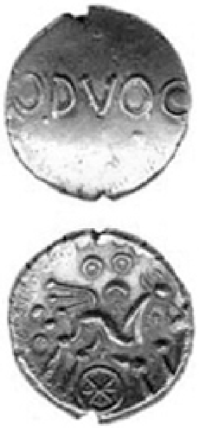

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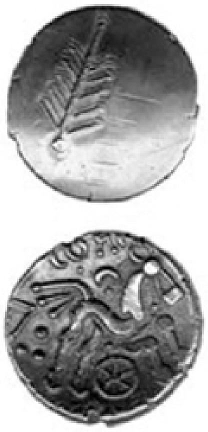

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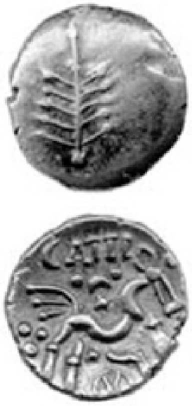

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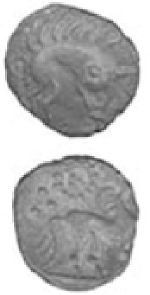

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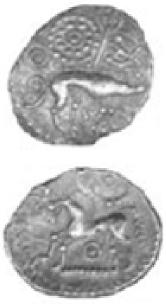

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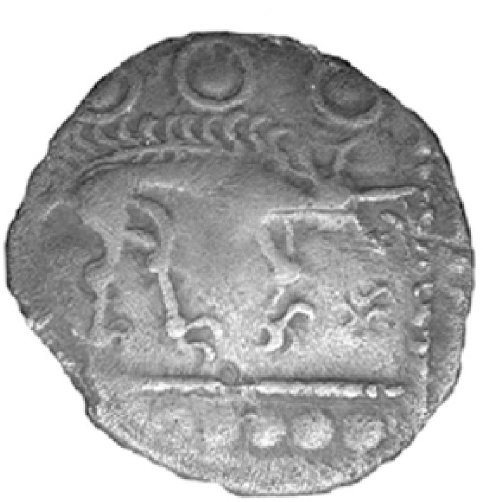
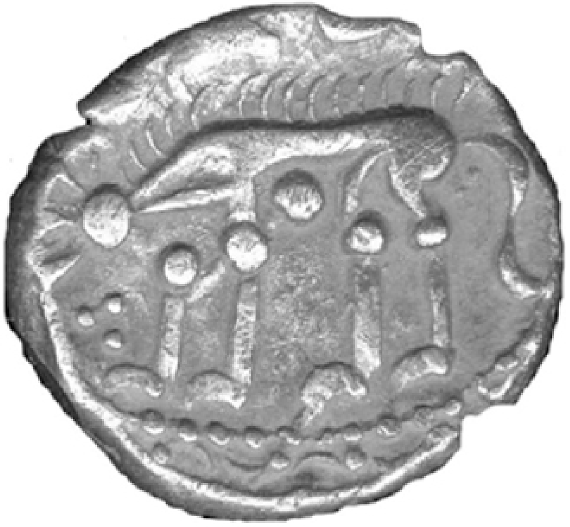


11 (enlarged ×3)



12 (enlarged ×3)

Reproduced in colour on page 223

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7

Technologies of the body: Iron Age and Roman grooming and display

Hella Eckardt

Introduction

Personal appearance is central to the perception of self, and this paper will discuss a group of small and humble objects that are closely associated with grooming and that can thus be argued to be of considerable social and symbolic significance. While mirrors, cosmetic grinders, razors and shears also occur in late Iron Age and Roman contexts (Fox 1958; Jackson forthcoming; Boon 1991; Gaitzsch 1989/90), the focus of this paper is on small copper-alloy toilet instruments, namely tweezers, ear-scoops/toilet spoons and 'nail-cleaners' (characterised by a bifid tip). On elaborate sets further instruments such as files and picks can be added. As part of an ongoing research project we (Eckardt and Crummy forthcoming) have collected over 1300 objects from Roman Britain, examining not just their chronological and spatial distribution but also their social contexts (Eckardt and Crummy 2003; Eckardt with Crummy 2006; Eckardt 2005). While status may have been expressed through the display of elaborate chatelaine brooches (see Figure 7.3), most toilet instruments are small and often poorly made, suggesting that the presentation of a well-groomed body, that is the result of the use of the objects, may have been as important as the objects themselves. Both in the Iron Age and the Roman period, toilet instruments appear to have been used by men and women (e.g. Portesham (Fitzpatrick 1996), Maiden Castle (Wheeler 1943, 63), Lankhills (Clarke 1979, 254–255, fig. 72, 127)). However, while there are similarities in the types of objects and in their contexts, there are also significant changes in the use of toilet instruments between the Iron Age and the Roman period.

In this paper, the theme of changing uses of toilet instruments will be examined through a comparison of Iron Age and Roman sets, ending with the development and use of chatelaine brooches. These highly decorative objects may be seen as a specifically British design, with many features (e.g. duplication of instruments and aspects of the aesthetics of decoration) echoing earlier Iron Age examples. While not all the artefacts discussed in this paper fall within the main time period covered by this volume, they do relate to many of the themes addressed by it. In particular, we can compare the use of decorated metalwork for display in the Iron Age and Roman periods. Toilet instruments, just like cosmetic grinders (Jackson forthcoming) and mirrors (Joy, this volume) relate to changing contexts of display and bodily presentation in the Late Iron Age and early Roman period. While the objects discussed in this paper are much smaller than the elaborate weapons and mirrors discussed elsewhere in this volume, there are also shared techniques of manufacture, and similar problems over the location of workshops and interpretation of distributions.

As well as examining continuities and changes in the use of toilet instruments from the Iron Age to the Roman period, I will also address the different approaches to artefacts between archaeological periods and disciplines. While there may be a tendency by Iron Age specialists to view the use of toilet instruments in terms of its symbolic significance (cf. the debate about the emergence of ‘the individual’: Hill 1997), many Roman specialists appear to prefer a more functional approach, viewing toilet instruments as part of a wider ‘Roman hygiene and civilisation’ paradigm (Riha 1986). Rather than assuming that toilet instruments form part of a ‘Roman’ tradition of grooming (baths, oil, strigil etc.) or a much older Iron Age one, it may be more interesting to think about how and why these things were adopted, and adapted, in various periods and regions (cf. Hill 1997). I hope to show that the ways in which these objects were used is diverse and complex, often representing selective adaptation and reinvention rather than simply copying. At the core of this research on toilet instruments is the belief that it is through the detailed contextual analysis of material culture that we can begin to understand the lived and varied experience of people in the past (Hill 1997, 96–7). Such a contextual approach to the social and symbolic significance of objects has great potential in the later Iron Age and Roman period with its rich contextual information.

Iron Age sets on the continent and in Britain

Iron Age toilet instrument sets first occur in the late Hallstatt and Early La Tène periods and are known from north Italy, Switzerland, and south-west Germany (cf. Primas 1970, fig. 16.10, pl. 12 B1, pl. 15 C9, pl. 18 E 5pl. 26, 15, pl. 44, D 3; Ulrich 1914, 175–6, pl. XV.15, 173–4, pl. XXVIII.7; Rittatore 1966, pl. 66; Stroh 1953, fig. 1,10 and 11). Primas (1970, fig. 27) dates them to Hallstatt C to La Tène A (c. 650–450 BC). Many examples are known from graves, and in this period toilet instrument sets are frequently associated with male burials (Primas 1970, 88–89; Jakobi 1974, 98; cf. Haffner 1976, 29). The majority of Iron Age toilet instruments are of copper-alloy, though they can also occur in iron; display sets can be made of precious metal, as for example the silver set from Rebbio (Como), which is decorated with gold leaf (Miron 1989, 41, fig. 1.1).

Iron Age toilet instruments frequently occur as sets or chatelaines (Figure 7.1). In its simplest form, this involves a ring fitted through the looped top of (usually three) toilet instruments (e.g. Primas 1970, pl. 12 B1 and 15 C9). The display value of a set can be enhanced by linking up to eight toilet instruments (duplicating instrument types), which are suspended on small wire loops from decorative plates. The plates themselves are often decorated with circle-and-dot designs and have a large loop for suspension (e.g. Primas 1970, pl. 18 E 5; Ulrich 1914, pl. XI.13; Rittatore 1966, pl. 66). Such elaborate sets are frequently associated with brooches in grave groups and may well have been worn in that way. An excellent example is known from Arbedo Cerinasca (Primas 1970, pl. 26.10). In a find from Santa Lucia two (one complete and one damaged) toilet sets as well as rings and amulets are fitted onto a brooch (Déchelette 1913, fig. 372.2). In all cases of sets with multiple toilet instruments, it is clearly concerns about status display rather than functionality that determined the design and use of these objects. The length of some of the instruments on Rebbio type sets, at between 70 and 80 mm for the nail-cleaners, which also have thick and blunted points

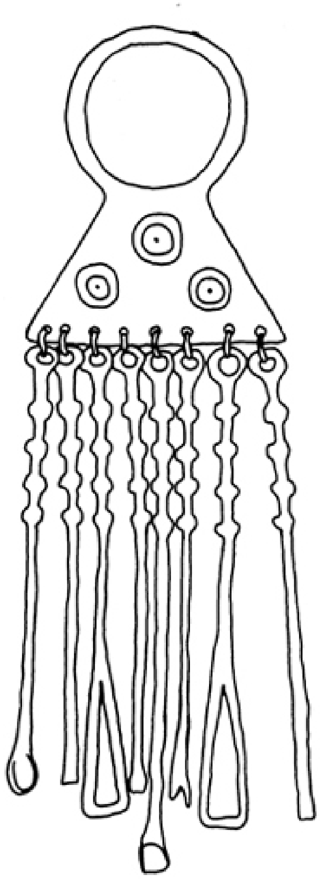
(Figure 7.1; Miron 1989, fig. 1.1), makes it difficult to envisage them as being of much practical use.

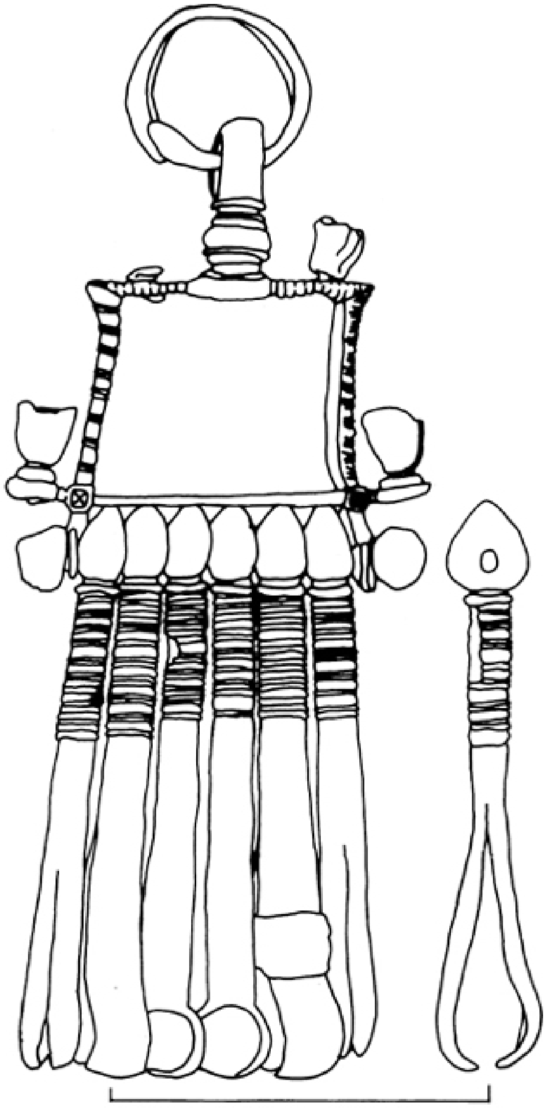
The close association of toilet sets and brooches in this period is also illustrated by the example from Palestro, Como (Déchelette 1913, fig. 372.3; Miron 1989, fig. 1.2), where eight instruments as well as their original holder have been placed directly onto the pin of a Sanguisuga brooch. The Palestro and the Rebbio examples differ from the other sets discussed so far in that the instruments are suspended on a shackle-and-bar holder. This type of suspension mechanism has been discussed in detail by Miron (1989), and the same technique continues to be used in Roman Britain, for example for chatelaine brooches (see below). Some toilet instruments, such as the examples from Hochdorf (Figure 7.1; Miron 1989, 43, fig. 2.7) have mouldings on the upper part of the shaft that are decorated with coral inlay, a decorative feature that reappears in the shape of enamel decoration in the second century AD chatelaine sets. Even if the Iron Age toilet instruments are not evenly spread in time and space, some striking patterns emerge when we examine the use of toilet instruments in the Late Iron Age and into the Roman period.

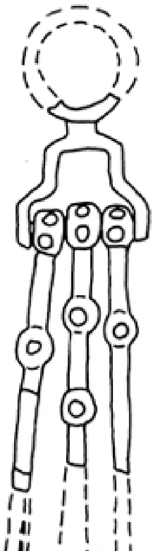
The use of toilet instruments continues in the late La Tène period (e.g. Manching, Hradischt and Basel-Gasfabrik: Jakobi 1974; Pic 1906; Major 1940; Furger-Gunti and Berger 1980), and indeed into the Augustan period (Miron 1989, 60). Miron’s Type E (see Figure 7.1), which has a markedly restricted distribution in the Moselle area, is dated to the Augustan period (Miron 1989, 49–51, figs. 6–7, 13). A set from Cologne, which appears to have been associated with Augustan coinage is also known (Fremersdorf 1951, fig. 4) and a set found corroded to an early imperial brooch is known from a villa at Guiry-Gadancourt, Seine-et-Oise (Miron 1989, 53, no. 39; Mitard 1960, 175, fig. 22). After this date elaborate toilet sets, and nail-cleaners in particular, seem to disappear from the continent (cf. Miron 1989, 60), and most tellingly, there are no nail-cleaners at all in the large assemblage of toilet instruments from Augst and Kaiseraugst (Riha 1986).

The fluctuating popularity through time of elaborate sets, and of nail-cleaners in particular, deserves closer attention as it argues against simple copying and for more complex processes of adoption. The function of nail-cleaners (characterised by ending in a bifid tip, see Figure 7.2) is controversial. Déchelette (1927, 777–778; 1913, 879–883) identifies the instrument as a *grattoir* or scraper/scratcher and believes it to be the ancestor of the Roman *scalptorium* (Soutou 1959, 121–122; both citing Martial, Epigrams XIV.83). Regardless of whether the object is identified as a scraper, head-scratcher or as a nail-cleaner or nail-cutter as in the Anglophone and German literature (cf. Mansfeld 1971, 109, footnote 128), it is interesting that many of the Iron Age examples (see Soutou 1959, fig. 1; Pic 1906, pl. XXXIII.46) vary very little from the Romano-British types. Many examples have a twisted shaft or strongly moulded upper shaft, both features that are relatively rare in Roman Britain, but in general one would be hard-pressed to distinguish between Romano-British and continental Iron Age examples if no contextual information was available. In Poland, nail-cleaners are characteristic of phases Hallstatt C and D, and occur in a wide range of forms, including examples with twisted shafts and with large loops. A decorative feature limited to Hallstatt C nail-cleaners from Poland is a round or rhombic opening on the centre of the shaft (Gedl 1988, 84–85, pl. 19–20; fig 2).

Other suggestions for the use of the object with bifid tips include combing the eyebrows or moustache, separating the eyelashes after the application of a mascara-like cosmetic, or cutting patterns of double grooves into face-paint. The bifid tip may have been used to clean and smooth nails, or to push back cuticles. Mansfeld (1971, 109, footnote 128) suggests that a replica produced good results when used to shave and cut fingernails. While we may never know the objects' precise function, their use as a cosmetic instrument is not in doubt, due to their close association with other instruments such as tweezers and scoops. In Manching, we find a multi-purpose object with a bifid tip at one end and an earscoop at the other; a concave blade and a file are located at the centre of the blade (Jakobi 1974, 95, pl. 29.531). The bifid tip can also occur on Hallstatt period pins (e.g. from Sissach: Drack 1957, pl. 3.5).







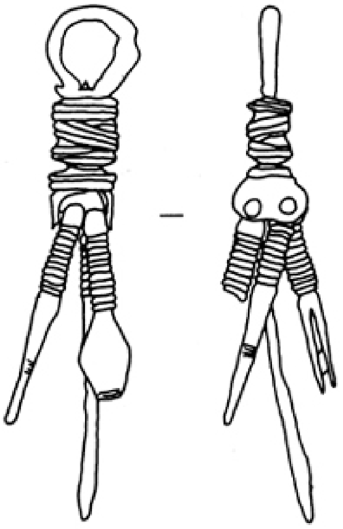


Figure 7.1. Iron Age toilet sets from Castione-Bergamo, Rebbio, Hochdorf and the Titelberg. After: Primas 1970, pl. 18E5; Miron 1989, fig. 1.1, 2.7 and 6.27. Scale 3:4

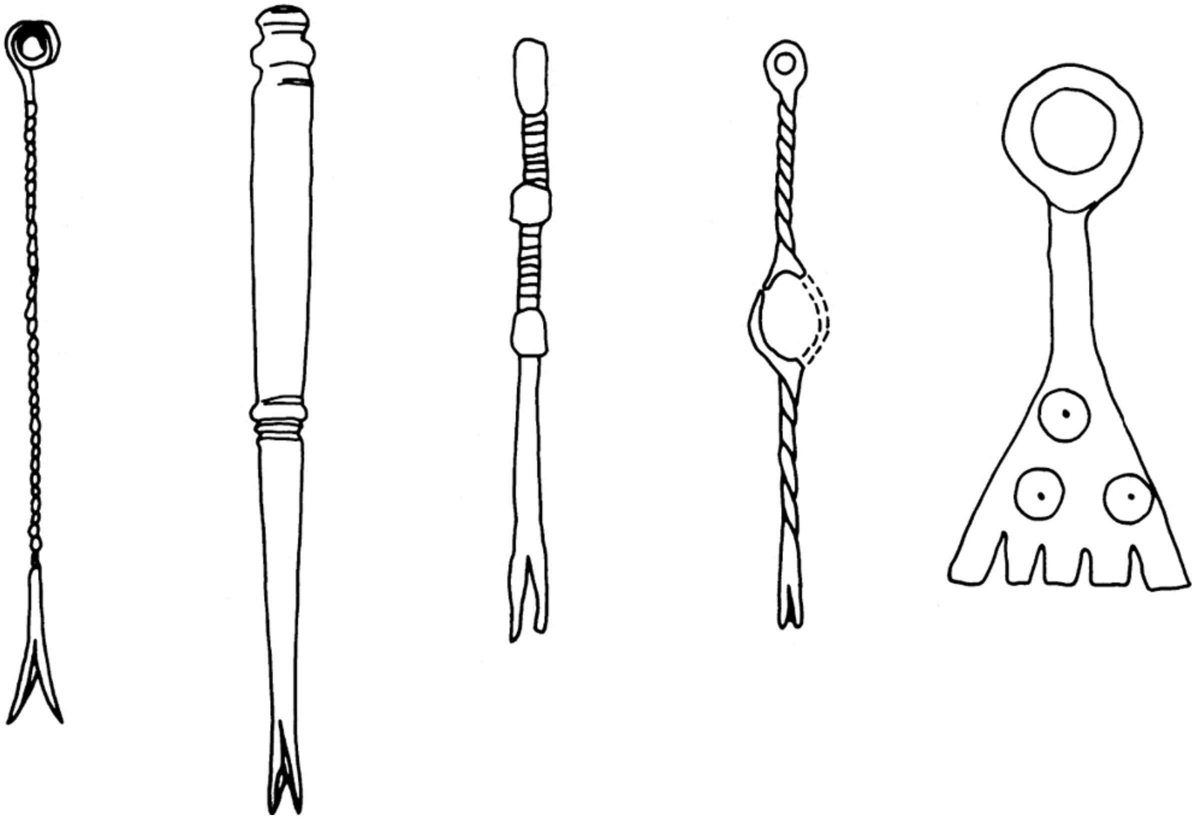


Figure 7.2. Nail-cleaners from Hallstatt, Perthes-les-Hurlus, Sesto Calende and Sobocisko, and a scraper from Stradonitz. After: Déchelette 1913, fig. 370.1; Déchelette 1927, fig. 547.3 and 548.9; Gedl 1988, pl. 20.545 and Primas 1970, fig. 16.10. Scale 1:1

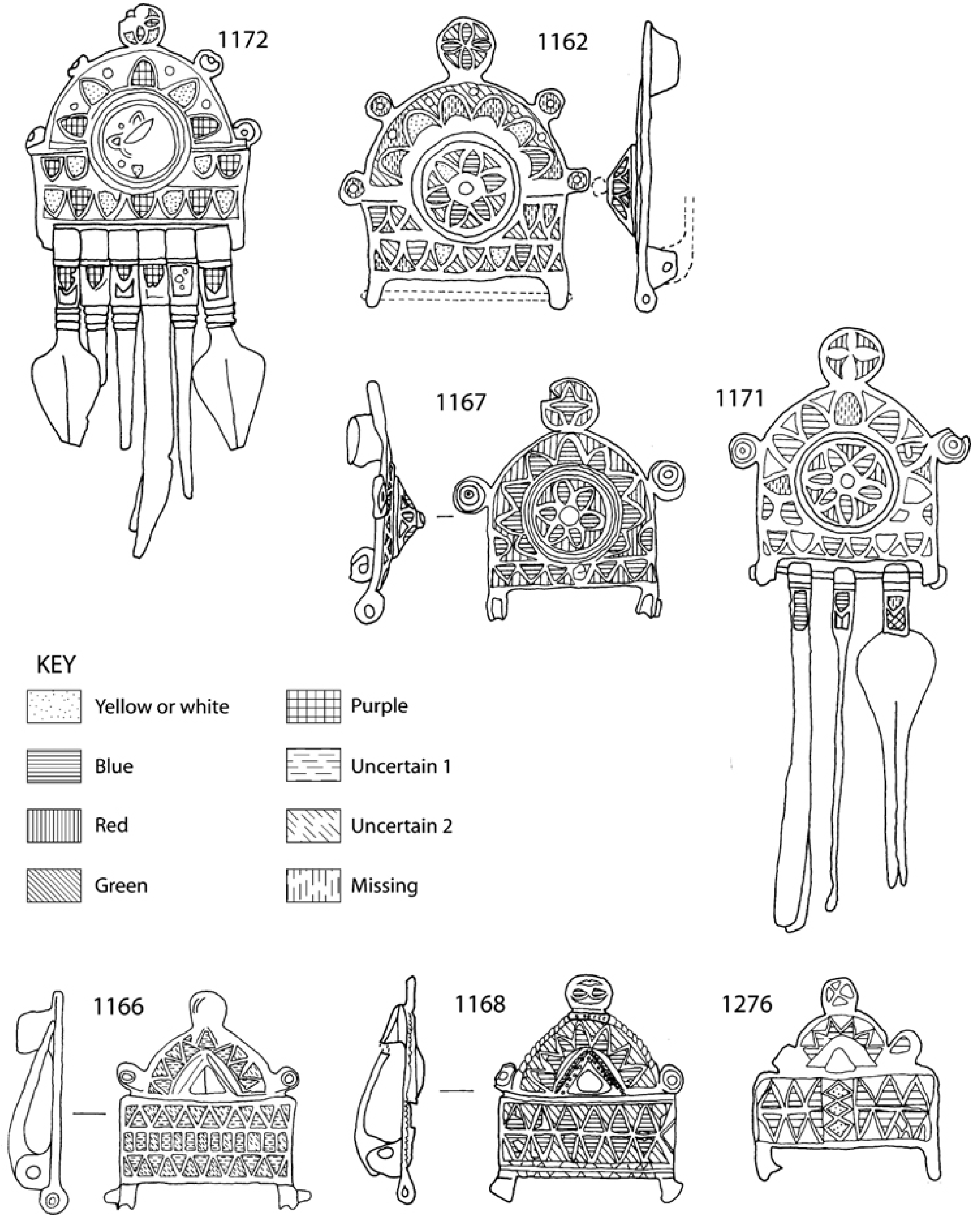
A type of toilet instrument that occurs in the Iron Age but not the Roman period and which may be typologically and functionally related to nail-cleaners is the scraper (Figure 7.2). Déchelette (1927, fig. 547 and 548) identifies as *grattoirs* both the examples with bifid tips and the small objects ending in a triangular blade with three to six teeth, which are usually termed scrapers. These objects flare towards the tip, often creating a sharply defined triangular blade, which is frequently decorated with a circle-and-dot design (Jakobi 1974, 96–97, pl. 29.528–9; Déchelette 1927, fig. 548.5–10; Pic 1906, pl. XII.36–40, pl. XVII.12, 14, 22). The slightly narrower version of this type can occur as part of a set, as in the famous example from the Basel-Gasfabrik (Major 1940, 155, fig. 70.23; Furger-Gunti and Berger 1980, 79, pl. 12, no. 264), which probably came from an unrecognised burial. A Là Tene burial at Dürnberg near Hallein contained an unusual scraper decorated with a small face mask and linked to tweezers through a bronze ring (Penninger 1960, 358).

In Britain, apart from rare earlier examples such as those from Arras (cf. Stead 1979), toilet instruments only begin to occur in significant numbers in graves and settlements of the later Iron Age and conquest period (Hill 1997, 98 and 105). While it is possible that toilet instruments were used in the early and middle Iron Age but did not reach the archaeological record, it seems more likely that their appearance in the late Iron Age reflects a real change in terms of behaviour. Hill (1997, 100) notes their presence on sites mainly in the south-east of England that are characterised by a readiness to adopt "Gallo-Belgic/Romanized material culture". In addition to sites such as King Harry Lane (e.g. Stead and Rigby 1989, 334, fig. 136.6) and Skeleton Green (Partridge 1981, 105, fig. 54, 14), toilet instruments are also known from a recently published burial at Hinxton, dated to the late first century BC (Hill et al. 1999). While it may be too simplistic (and given the fact that barely twenty examples are known from LPRIA contexts perhaps a little ambitious) to see the occurrence of toilet instruments as associated with the 'emergence of the individual', it can certainly be argued that the adoption of these new forms of material culture relates to deeper and archaeologically invisible changes in the ways in which some people presented themselves to others. Following the Roman conquest, toilet instruments begin to be deposited in much larger numbers, and their use continues into the fourth and fifth centuries AD. Of the 1369 toilet instruments recorded (Eckardt and Crummy forthcoming), 613 (45%) had context dates; of these 131 have a first century, 171 a second century, 121 a third century and 166 a fourth century AD date. This chronological division is, however, crude and does not take account of residuality. Of the recorded examples, 1151 (84%) are settlement (as opposed to burial, hoard or sanctuary) finds, suggesting that the use of toilet instruments is part of daily and habitual grooming routines rather than just associated with funerary display. Tweezers (623 examples) are always the most common toilet instruments but in Britain nail-cleaners (516 examples) come a close second.

From the brief description above it appears that the double-pointed nail-cleaner was originally as essential a part of toilet sets as were the tweezers and ear-scoop, but that on the continent it was gradually replaced by other instruments and eventually disappeared. The form thus belongs to a pre-Roman 'Celtic' tradition, which on the continent did not survive contact with the Roman world, unlike the other instruments found on the sets, the ear-scoops and tweezers. In Britain, on the other hand, the nail-cleaner forms an important part of toilet sets in the Roman period. While there are new forms of decoration, some of the Romano-British nail-cleaners (e.g. those with a twisted shaft) are very similar to the continental Iron Age examples. As the function of this object is still unclear we may never know why this particular instrument was falling out of favour on the continent but continued to be important in Britain. The changing forms of toilet instruments exemplify the complexities of adopting new forms of material culture, as it clearly does not fit into a model of one-directional 'Romanisation' (or indeed 'Celtification') but appears to show more varied processes of adaptation and bricolage.

Romano-British chatelaine brooches

Earlier we examined sets of toilet instruments from Iron Age contexts, where multiplication and highly decorative suspension plates as well as association with brooches were key features. In the Roman period on the continent these features do not appear to be especially important, but they do occur in Roman Britain, in the form of so-called chatelaine brooches. While it is not certain that all toilet sets were displayed on the body, chatelaine brooches obviously were. In chatelaine brooches the toilet instruments are suspended from a shackle-and-bar mechanism set below a highly decorative enamel brooch. Twenty eight chatelaine brooches were recorded; numbers given below and in Table 7.1 refer to the forthcoming corpus of Romano-British toilet instruments (Eckardt and Crummy forthcoming).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Red
Uncertain 2
Green
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1166
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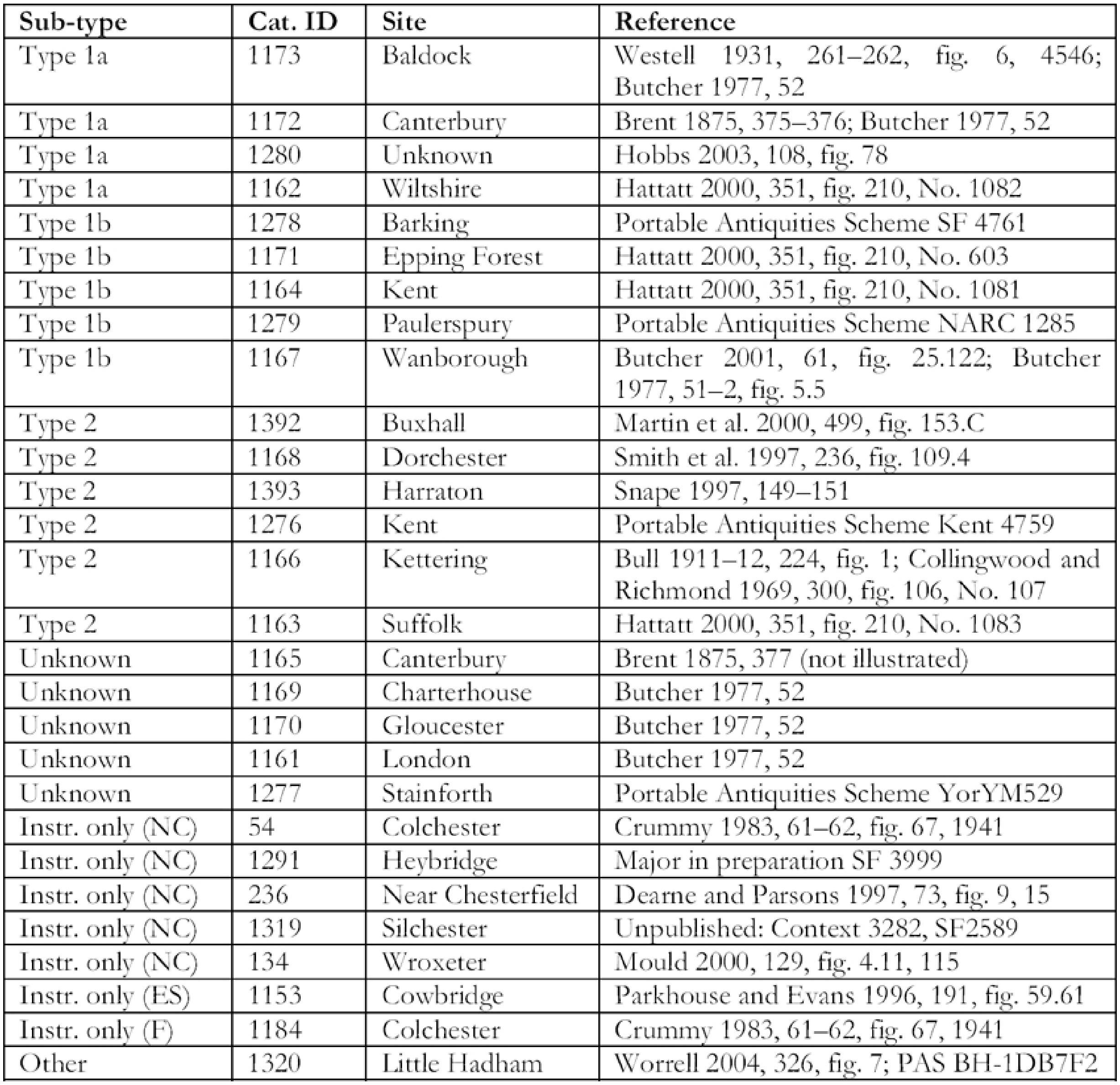
1276

Figure 7.3. Romano-British chatelaine brooches: 1172 Canterbury (Brent 1875, 375–376), 1162 Wiltshire (Hattatt 2000, fig. 210, no. 1082), 1167 Wanborough (Butcher 2001, fig. 25.122), 1171 Epping Forest (Hattatt 2000, fig. 210, no. 603), 1166 Kettering (Collingwood and Richmond 1969,

fig.106, no. 107), 1168 Dorchester (Smith et al. 1997, fig. 109.4), 1276 Kent (Portable Antiquities Scheme Kent 4759). Scale 3:4



Sub-type	Cat. ID	Site	Reference
Type 1a	1173	Baldock	Westell 1931, 261–262, fig. 6, 4546; Butcher 1977, 52
Type 1a	1172	Canterbury	Brent 1875, 375–376; Butcher 1977, 52
Type 1a	1280	Unknown	Hobbs 2003, 108, fig. 78
Type 1a	1162	Wiltshire	Hattatt 2000, 351, fig. 210, No. 1082
Type 1b	1278	Barking	Portable Antiquities Scheme SF 4761
Type 1b	1171	Epping Forest	Hattatt 2000, 351, fig. 210, No. 603
Type 1b	1164	Kent	Hattatt 2000, 351, fig. 210, No. 1081
Type 1b	1279	Paulerspury	Portable Antiquities Scheme NARC 1285
Type 1b	1167	Wanborough	Butcher 2001, 61, fig. 25.122; Butcher 1977, 51–2, fig. 5.5
Type 2	1392	Buxhall	Martin et al. 2000, 499, fig. 153.C
Type 2	1168	Dorchester	Smith et al. 1997, 236, fig. 109.4
Type 2	1393	Harraton	Snape 1997, 149–151
Type 2	1276	Kent	Portable Antiquities Scheme Kent 4759
Type 2	1166	Kettering	Bull 1911–12, 224, fig. 1; Collingwood and Richmond 1969, 300, fig. 106, No. 107
Type 2	1163	Suffolk	Hattatt 2000, 351, fig. 210, No. 1083
Unknown	1165	Canterbury	Brent 1875, 377 (not illustrated)
Unknown	1169	Charterhouse	Butcher 1977, 52
Unknown	1170	Gloucester	Butcher 1977, 52
Unknown	1161	London	Butcher 1977, 52
Unknown	1277	Stainforth	Portable Antiquities Scheme YorYM529
Instr. only (NC)	54	Colchester	Crummy 1983, 61–62, fig. 67, 1941
Instr. only (NC)	1291	Heybridge	Major in preparation SF 3999
Instr. only (NC)	236	Near Chesterfield	Dearne and Parsons 1997, 73, fig. 9, 15
Instr. only (NC)	1319	Silchester	Unpublished: Context 3282, SF2589
Instr. only (NC)	134	Wroxeter	Mould 2000, 129, fig. 4.11, 115
Instr. only (ES)	1153	Cowbridge	Parkhouse and Evans 1996, 191, fig. 59.61
Instr. only (F)	1184	Colchester	Crummy 1983, 61–62, fig. 67, 1941
Other	1320	Little Hadham	Worrell 2004, 326, fig. 7; PAS BH-1DB7F2

Table 7.1. Chatelaine brooches in Britain

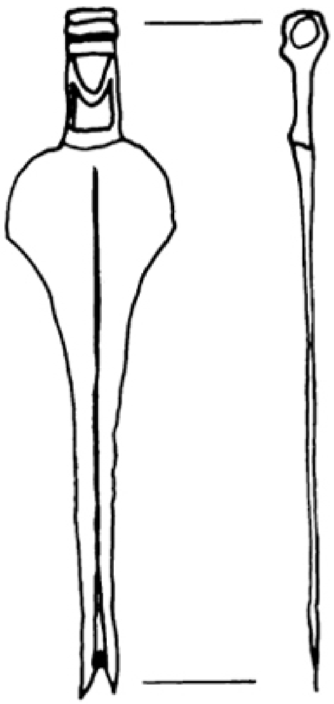
Chatelaine brooches can be divided into two groups (Figure 7.3). One (Type 1) is based on the ‘sunburst’ (umbonate enamelled plate) brooch (cf. Hattatt 1987, 179–185) with a central flower motif surrounded by rays or petals with lugs on the rim. On the chatelaine brooches the design is adapted so that the lower end is straight and has a projecting lug on each side through which is fixed a riveted bar on which the instruments are suspended. Two sub-groups can be distinguished; Type 1A (1162, 1172, 1173, 1280) is characterised by having a linear row of enamelled cells at the base, with a second row flanking the circular motif. The other subgroup (Type 1B: 1164, 1167, 1171, 1278, 1279) differs in having only a single basal line. Instead of forming a second row, the cells form part of the design surrounding the circular centre. Brooches in this sub-group also lack the lower pair of lugs. No two of the brooches are exactly alike but they are very close in the detail of the design and some may well have been made in the same workshop. The exact location of such a workshop is at present unknown, and the type has a wide distribution. There are, however, several from Kent, perhaps pointing to that area or London.

Type 2 consists of a rectangular enamelled panel surmounted by an enamelled arch with two side lugs and one at the top (1163, 1166, 1168, 1276, 1392, 1393). It is closely related in terms of design to the first group. Again, all the recorded examples are slightly different, for example 1166 has three bands of enamelled cells (the central one consisting of rectangles rather than triangles) while 1168 and 1163 have two bands. 1276, also from Kent, has a vertical central panel of lozenges and triangles. A related design is known from Hertfordshire (1320, see Figure 7.4) and there are a number of examples for which no images or detailed descriptions are available (see Table 1).

Two of the chatelaine brooches come from burials: 1172 from Canterbury and 1173 from Baldock. The latter provides evidence for the start date of the type as the burial is dated to the late first century AD, apparently on the basis of the samian Drag. 18/31 plate bearing a partial stamp that is interpreted as Flavian (Westell 1931, 261–2, 299). The presence of an iron open lamp in this grave group may argue for a late first – early second century date (Eckardt 2002, 138–141, 239), and a second century date is usually attributed to enamelled plate brooches. The burial is unsexed but the presence of a mirror may suggest a female grave. 1172 is an antiquarian find and cannot be dated or sexed. Another brooch from Canterbury (1165) may also derive from a burial but is another antiquarian find with no detailed information. The only other chatelaine brooch with stratigraphic evidence (1168 from Dorchester) is broadly dated to the first-second century.

Most of the recorded examples lack their instruments. Where present, the toilet instruments are characterised by a rectangular panel containing two enamelled cells at the top of the shaft (Figure 7.4). The upper one is an inverted triangle, the lower has two side points enclosing it. In a number of cases individual toilet instruments have become detached from the brooch (54, 134, 236, 1153, 1291, 1319); these may have been used after the attachment mechanism on the brooch broke. Even where three instruments remain attached, there can be room on the bar for at least two more (e.g. 1173, 1171). Instruments usually include the familiar combination of nail-cleaner, tweezers and earscoop, but files (1173, 1184) and a possible probe (1280) are also known. Toilet instruments suspended from a chatelaine brooch must have been quite difficult to handle, especially when dealing with a ‘full set’ of six objects (e.g. 1172, 1280). Both these examples have two leaf-shaped nail-cleaners, suggesting that display rather than functionality was important.

The distribution map (Figure 7.5) shows a strong emphasis on the south of England, with Harraton (1393) the most northerly example; however, this brooch was found in a garden in an area of no known Roman activity, and its context is thus unclear. A set from Stainforth (1277) in Yorkshire is a metal-detected find and may be either an outlier or an inaccurately reported object, perhaps making the Wroxeter (134) chatelaine the most northerly securely provenanced find. The majority of finds comes from Kent, Essex and Hertfordshire but it is not possible to suggest production centres. This distribution can be compared to that of umbonate brooches with enamelled decoration (Hattatt 1987, 179–180, fig. 58), which also shows a marked concentration in the southeastern part of England. Chatelaine brooches are exceptionally rare on the continent. A single example with an ear-scoop, file, tweezers, and two nail-cleaners was found in Gimbsheim, near Mainz (Figure 7.6; Miron 1989, no. 38; Grünewald 1986, 65, Abb. 53), but it is of British manufacture and must be either a deliberate export (through trade or gift-giving) or the possession of a travelling or emigrant Romano-Briton.



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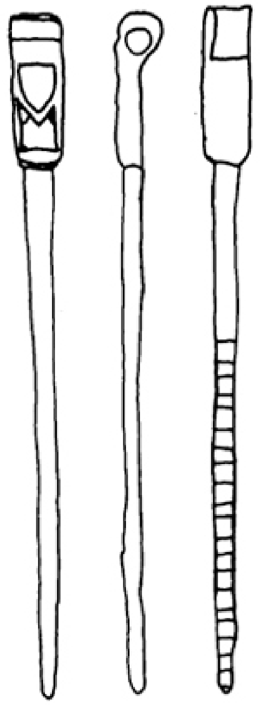

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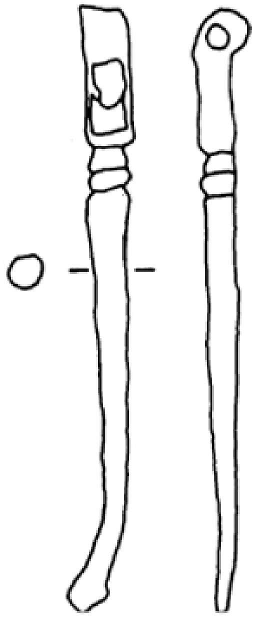

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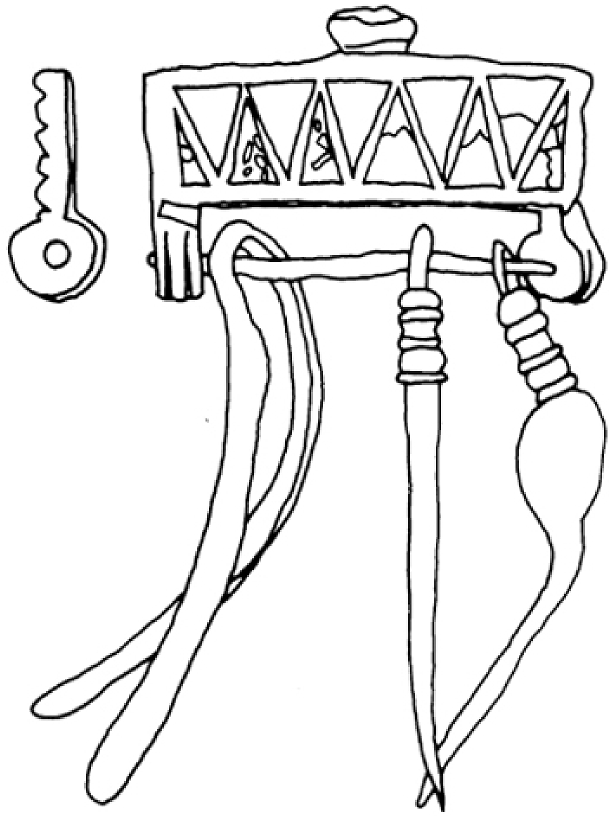

1320

Figure 7.4. Individual instruments from Romano-British chatelaine brooches: 134 Wroxeter (Mould 2000, fig. 4.11, 115), 1184 Colchester (Crummy 1983, fig. 67, 1941), 1153 Cowbridge (Parkhouse and Evans 1996, fig. 59.61), and a related type from Little Hadham 1320 (Worrell 2004, fig. 7). Scale 1:1

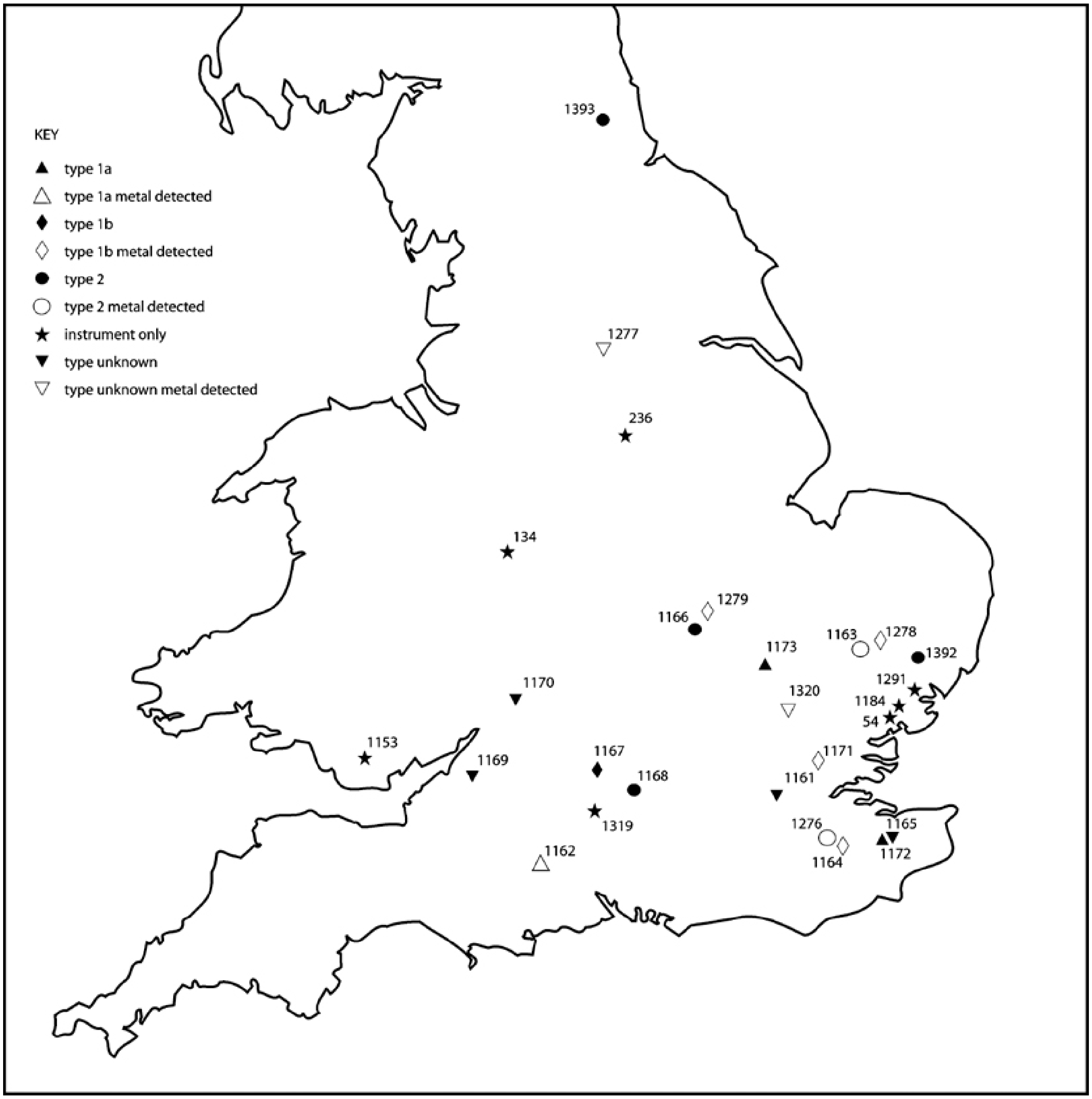
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Figure 7.5. The distribution of Romano-British chatelaine brooches

I have argued previously that the ‘social distribution’ of an artefact is as significant as the spatial and chronological distribution (Crummy and Eckardt 2003; Eckardt 2005). For the Roman period we are able to systematically record and assess the broader archaeological context and cultural milieu of an artefact, and these context patterns can provide new insights into the social significance of material culture. For chatelaine brooches this context assessment is somewhat diluted by the large number of brooches of unknown provenance. Of the 28 recorded chatelaine brooches 13 are metal-detected finds with only very general provenances such as “Kent”, or from sites where no further information on the archaeological context is available. Nevertheless, the social distribution graph (Figure 7.7) shows some interesting trends. No chatelaine brooches are recorded from military sites at all, although this may partly be a result of their largely southern distribution. 9 examples come from large towns (Colchester, London and Gloucester) with a further 5 from *Civitas* Capitals (Canterbury, Dorchester, Silchester and Wroxeter). The category of ‘Small Towns’ is a fluid one, and while the classification of Wanborough as a small town poses few problems, other sites are more difficult. Burnham and Wacher (1990) include Charterhouse, Cowbridge and Baldock in their volume, but define them as ‘industrial’ and ‘undefended’ settlements. Following Burnham and Wacher, they have all been classed as Small Towns here, but the dividing line between them and a site such as Kettering (here classed as rural) is clearly difficult. The only unequivocally rural site is Elms Farm, Heybridge; there are no chatelaine brooches from villa sites. The social distribution of chatelaine brooches can thus be interpreted as having an emphasis on urban sites of varying status, suggesting that this brooch type, while not associated with the military population, is common among the people living in larger settlements.

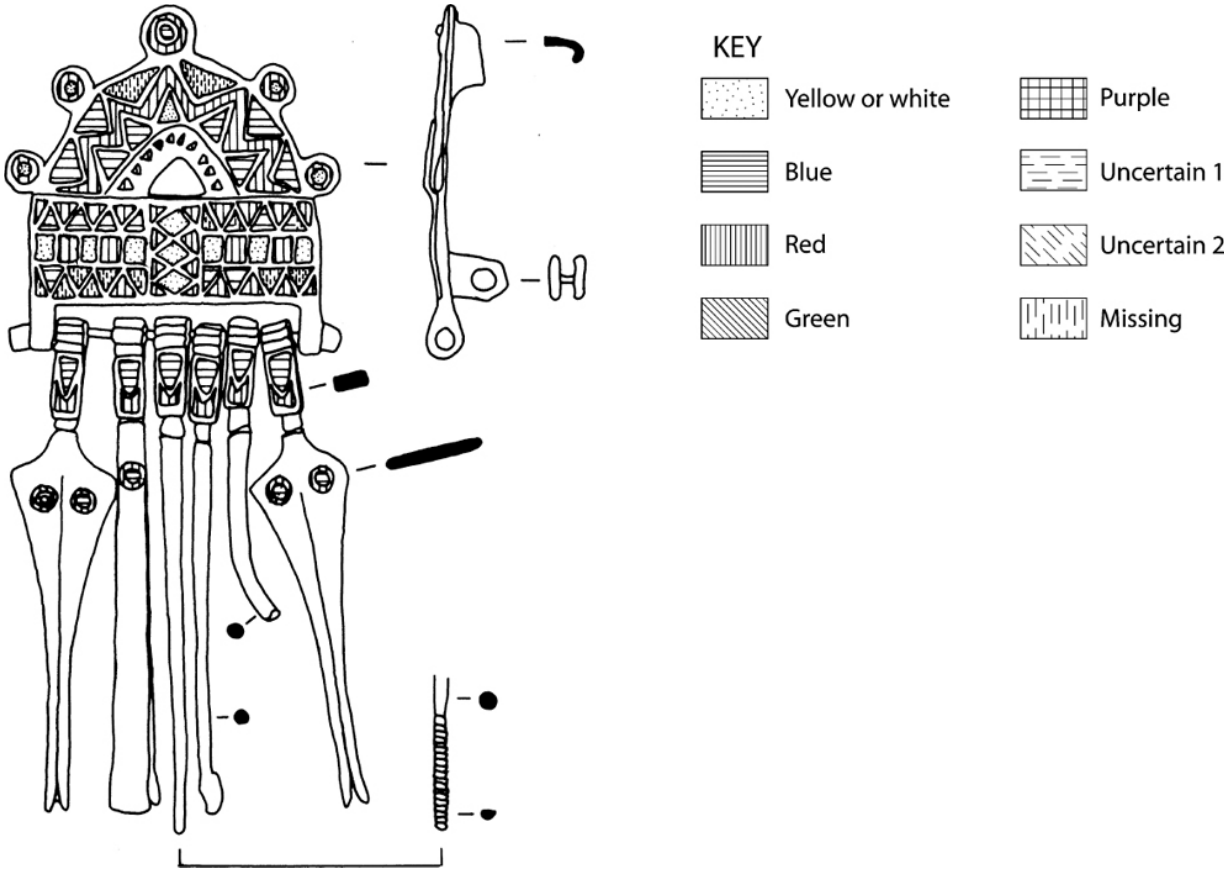
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Figure 7.6. A British chatelaine brooch from Gimbsheim, near Mainz. After: Miron 1989, fig. 9, no. 38. Scale 3:4

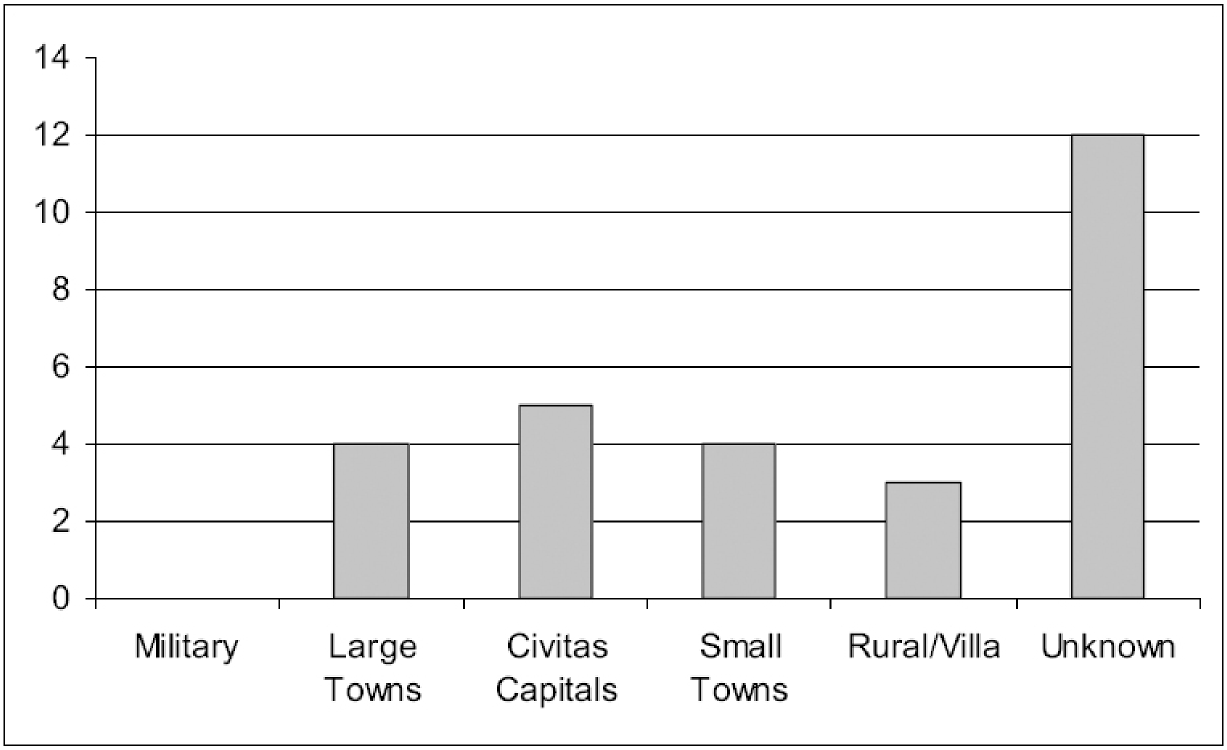

Figure 7.7. The social distribution of chatelaine brooches (Total 28)

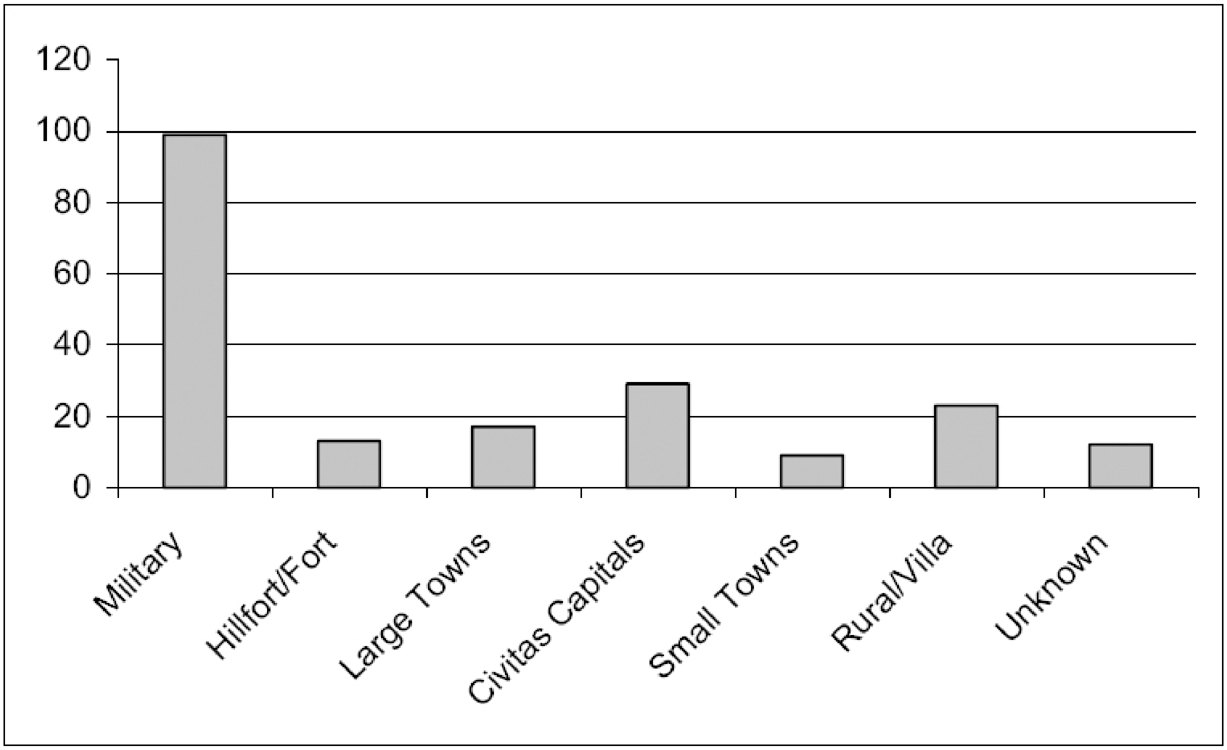

Figure 7.8. The social distribution of knee brooches (Total 202)

While the large number of brooches from unknown sites, and the overall small numbers, argue against reading too much into this social distribution graph, it can be compared to those for other brooches of largely second and third century date (Eckardt 2005). Such comparisons represent a form of source criticism, addressing the question of whether the social distribution of an object type is simply a reflection of the overall differences in the numbers of sites known from Britain (i.e. there are many more rural and smaller settlements but towns and military sites have been preferentially excavated). By examining other objects of similar size, material, function and date, we may begin to see real differences in the ways in which different groups of people were using specific types of objects. For example, knee brooches show a very marked military emphasis in their distribution (Figure 7.8) while Horse and Rider brooches occur mainly on rural/villa or sanctuary sites and small towns (cf. Eckardt 2005). By systematically comparing the contexts of a wide range of Romano-British objects in this way, we can begin to build up a patchwork of the 'material culture packages' associated with different cultural milieus, and to work towards a deeper understanding of how Romano-British artefacts were used.

Conclusion

Toilet instruments can be seen as a 'technology of the body', and in the later Iron Age and Roman period in Britain we begin to see new ways of presenting a groomed appearance. J. D. Hill has argued that changes in the use and deposition of toilet instruments relate to the projection of specific new identities, perhaps in particular by groups in the south-east of England characterised by significant Gallo-Belgic influences (Hill 1997). This paper has attempted to build on this work, and stressed that the adoption of toilet instruments is not a simple copying from the continent, but a more complex process of adaptation and bricolage. This is especially evident when examining so-called nail-cleaners, a type of toilet instrument that appears to die out on the continent in the Augustan period, but continues to flourish in Britain into the fourth century (Crummy and Eckardt 2003). Material evidence for other specifically British grooming practices in the Late Iron Age and Roman period exists in the form of cosmetic grinders (Jackson forthcoming), and the highly decorative chatelaine brooches discussed here. These enamelled brooches are a rare example of the overt display of grooming instruments. The desire for display is reflected not just in their colourful appearance but also in the multiplication of instruments, which would have made actual handling and use impractical. I have argued that in order to understand the complexities of cultural use and symbolic meaning of toilet instruments we need to adopt a contextual approach. This methodology can be applied with relative ease to the Romano-British period with its highly developed and well-researched settlement hierarchy, but it also has great potential for the Iron Age.

Acknowledgements

All illustrations were produced by Aidan Colyer with funding from the UROP (Undergraduate Research Opportunities Programme). He would like to thank Margaret Mathews for advice and help.

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8

Celtic art in Roman Britain

Fraser Hunter

Introduction

Celtic art did not die with the coming of the legions. As is well known, there was a persistence of indigenous design elements in the art of Roman Britain, and its offspring emerged in the north and west of the archipelago in the post-Roman period. Yet the persistence and development of Iron Age art styles in Roman Britain has seen much opinion but little analysis. My title is deliberately oppositional; both 'Celtic art' and 'Roman Britain' have too often been treated as monoliths, and it is only in recent years that more subtle approaches have begun to yield fruit. The main aim of this paper is to start the process of a more nuanced understanding of this complex area. It is not a unitary phenomenon: there is a wide range of styles on a wide range of objects, some indigenous, some Roman, and some hybrids (Figure 8.1). But the persistence of the indigenous styles and their reaction to Rome make it a fascinating area of study.

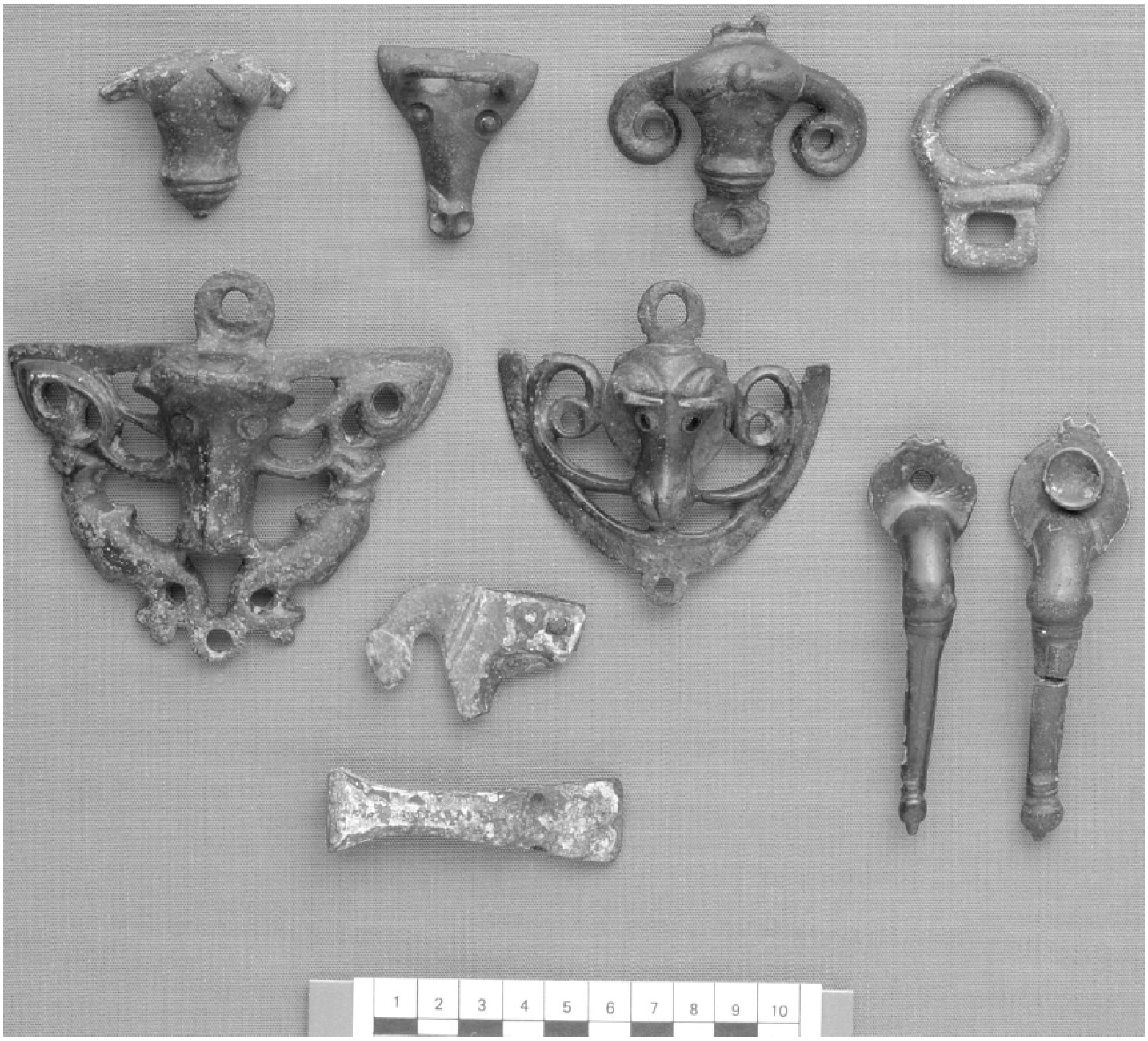


Figure 8.1. Group of ox mounts and other items from Little Orme, N Wales; although found together, the mounts differ considerably in detail, and some have markedly Classical features, such as dolphins. Photo: © National Museum of Wales

History of study

The presence of Celtic-style decoration on Romano-British items has long been recognised and debated. This has mostly been framed in terms of the goodness or badness of Romano-British art. Haverfield set the tone in his ‘Romanization of Roman Britain’:

> ‘…the British Celt abandoned his national art and adopted the Roman provincial fashion … Little local manufactures of small objects witness to sporadic survivals’ (Haverfield 1923, 48)

This is rather dismissive both of provincial art and of the ‘definite survivals of Celtic traditions’ (ibid.). However, it was R. G. Collingwood who really vented his spleen on Romano-British art.

> ‘With the Roman conquest a rapid and disastrous change comes over the whole spirit of British craftsmanship … mass-production takes the place of individual design and execution. Within a generation, every trace of La Tène art has disappeared except in the north, where it lingers for another half-century; at last it dies out there also, and by the late second century everything that meets the archaeologist’s eye is infected with the uniform and sordid ugliness of drab Romano-British daylight’ (Collingwood and Myres 1937, 249)

As Martin Henig has rightly commented, these perceptions owed more to contemporary concerns than any objective assessment of the problem (Henig 1995, 9–10). Henig has been at the forefront of the rehabilitation of Romano-British art; among other things he comments on the ‘continued liking for line and pattern’ as an inheritance from earlier traditions. However, the persistence of Celtic art styles into Roman Britain has received rather shorter shrift. The treatment of this material has been rather superficial, with commentators focussing on the supposed debasement of this noble artistic tradition to a minor, commercialised craft, serving the army in particular. Its significance is downplayed: for Henig, the art persists on ‘minor trinkets such as studs, horse-trappings and, above all, brooches’ (1995, 103); for the Megaws (2001, 230), ‘it is noticeable how much decoration after the Roman Conquest is on trinkets – brooches and boxes, for example – and how little on the scabbards, shields, spears, torcs and armrings of the pre-Roman period’. By contrast, Collingwood noted, with some satisfaction, the survival of Celtic traditions in the ‘highland fringe’, and indeed that ‘it even develops into new forms, not unworthy of its best tradition’ (Collingwood and Myres 1937, 256–7). For all Henig’s despair at Collingwood’s views, he was a sympathetic commentator on this northern art. More recent work has downplayed this material; ‘trinket’ is a term as emotively loaded as any Collingwood used, and the trend towards smaller decorative items was well-established before the advent of Rome (Hill 1995, 121; 1997; Hunter 2007, 289–90).

This material has generated much heat and feeling, but surprisingly little reasoned analysis. There is both a considerable corpus and a marked diversity in treatment and development – one single story is insufficient. My focus here will be on this metalwork in Central Britain, the region between the Humber and the Forth. I will attempt to define a new set of questions about this art, and then characterise the range of objects and styles involved, the processes of change and some of the contexts of use, aiming towards a more nuanced understanding. This is a substantial topic, ripe for research, and this paper can only scratch the surface of it.

Framework for an enquiry

It has long been clear that the flourishing of Celtic art in Britain was a late phenomenon in contrast to the Continent, with the bulk of British material dated to the first centuries BC/AD or so. A number of reasons may be suggested for this. There was a general increase in ornamentation and display during this time (cf. Hill 1997), while the proximity of Rome was probably a stimulus for creating very visible symbols in societies which felt under threat (MacGregor 1976, 177–8; Hunter 2007, 289). Yet this is not the full story. Hoard evidence shows that much late Celtic art was intimately associated with Roman items (e.g. Davies and Spratling 1976; Brailsford 1975). This was not just the dying throes of the tradition: production continued well into the Roman period, as seen clearly in the extensive recycling of Roman metal in later Celtic art (Dungworth 1996, 407–10; see also Gwilt and Davis, this volume), and confirmed by occasional mould finds (e.g. Prestatyn; Blockley 1989, 187–8). Finds from dated contexts in central Britain (especially from Roman forts) show that late Iron Age styles of object were in use throughout the first and second centuries AD (MacGregor 1976; Bishop 1998, 63–4; Garrow, this volume).

This creates a focus on two key topics: continuity and change. Why did these indigenous styles and forms persist? How were they adapted and modified, to appear on unfamiliar types of object or create new types? We need to start with some fairly basic questions as building blocks.

- What objects were involved?
- What styles were involved?
- Where did this take place, both spatially and socially? Who was making and using this material?
- How did things change?

From this we can start to develop interpretations. Are we dealing with regional styles, or preferences among particular social, political or ethnic groups? Was it indeed particularly popular with the auxiliaries? Does this reflect deliberate resistance to Rome; or an accommodation; or variable readings in different contexts? The starting assumption here is that these were more than simple decorative survivals: they were active social objects with a significance to their use. If our modern eyes mark them out as different from the Roman 'norm', it is likely that this difference was much more powerfully observed in contemporary society. These objects and their art were important and socially powerful things in the Iron Age; their continuity and adaptation into the Roman period are thus likely to be of significance, whatever that may be.

Yet these objects were inhabiting a changed world. The visual impact of the arrival of Rome must have been formidable. From an Iron Age world where most objects were plain, and where decoration was imbued with social and ritual significance, restricted to particular types of object (e.g. Evans 1989; Fitzpatrick 1997, 80–1), we enter a multimedia sensory explosion where little was left undecorated. People came face to face with new materials, such as silver and decorated glass-ware, new technologies such as niello and mould-formed pottery, and new iconographies where naturalism was dominant. What did the viewers make of the scenes on a decorated samian bowl in the precincts of Verlamion or on the summit of Traprain Law? What were their perceptions of this, and what were the responses to it? The changes in indigenous art need to be considered in terms of reactions to this new sensory landscape.

This very visual wealth has an impact on our approaches to the archaeology as well. We are inundated on Roman sites with small finds – and as a result tend to treat them as everyday, ordinary items. Yet on Iron Age sites, any one of these brooches, tweezers or rings would be swooped upon as a special find, bagged, boxed and given pride of place in the report. When we try to understand this material, we should remember this contrast. There must have been visual dislocation and marked visual inflation in the Roman period, in terms of viewers' expectations and the demands for their attention. The meaning of objects may be expected to shift in such situations of abundance. Yet this is likely to have led to more attuned and subtle approaches to using and understanding this visual culture. Far from transforming into mere trinkets, these small objects would have played a significant role in contemporary dramas of identity and understanding. But how are we to understand this? This quest feeds into topics of much broader interest in current scholarship, such as the nature and negotiation of identity, especially in the complex multicultural milieu of the Roman frontier (e.g. Eckardt 2005; Hill 2001; James 2001; Mattingly 2004). Such works form the intellectual landscape which guide this paper's approaches.

The range of objects

What material are we dealing with here? Table 8.1 provides a summary of the main Iron Age types which persisted into the Roman period, and of Romano-British items which display Celtic-style ornament. The Iron Age types involved are ones which were key existing arenas of social display – personal ornaments, weaponry, horse gear and feasting paraphernalia. This reinforces the point made earlier that they should not be dismissed as trinkets, but rather seen as socially important objects.

It is also clear that there was a strong selectivity in the Roman material which was emblazoned with Celtic art. There is a marked focus on jewellery and vessels – again, both areas of social display in Iron Age and Roman Britain. With the former, as Catherine Johns has noted, indigenous styles are found almost exclusively on brooches, where they are relatively commonplace. They are rare or unknown on types of Classical jewellery introduced to Britain. She links this plausibly to a focus on familiar forms – while the brooch types may be novel, the idea of decorative brooches was not, in contrast to other kinds of jewellery (Johns 1996, 182–5). Two examples can show the different ways in which influences could work, to illustrate the complexities.

Beaded torcs and hinged bracelets

Beaded torcs occur in two types, with separate (A) and solid (B) beads; there is probably a typological progression from A to B, although both are found in the first two centuries AD. The concept of the torc is not a Roman one – we can presume this comes from indigenous influence – but (with the exception only of the ornate Lochar Moss torc; MacGregor 1976, no. 204) the decoration shows nothing clearly 'Celtic' in style.

Since the last survey (MacGregor 1976, 97–9, 113–5), excavations and metal-detecting have increased the database from 14 examples to 37 (Hunter forthcoming). This leads to a significant shift in our understanding of the type. The distribution is now markedly broader, with many new finds from the English Midlands; rather than Forth to Humber, the core distribution runs south to the Severn-Wash line (Figure 8.2). Finds with associations confirm the first-second century AD date which MacGregor suggested; indeed, the quantity from Hadrian’s Wall and from Antonine contexts elsewhere suggests a second century floruit.

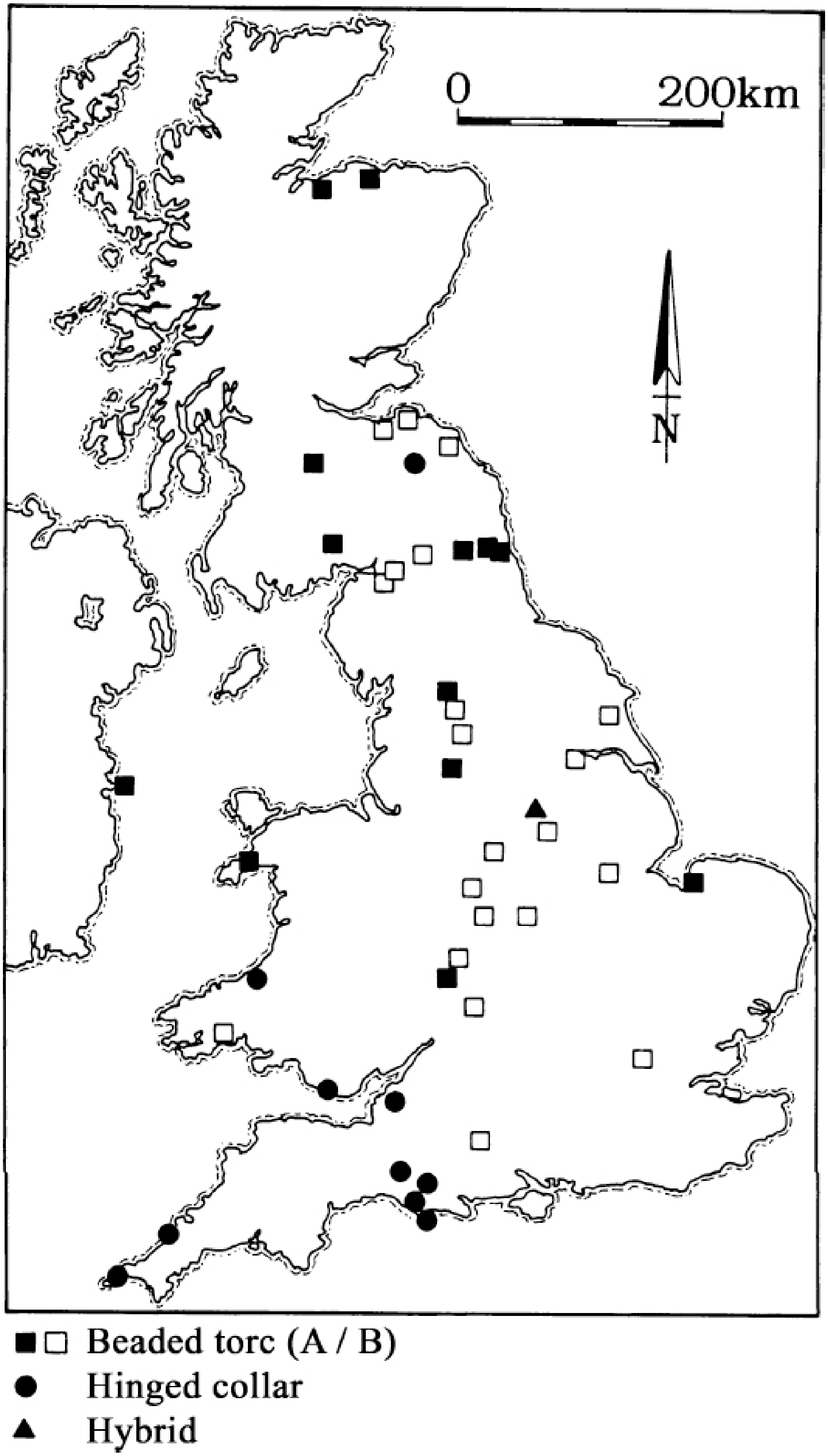
Category	**Objects**	**Key studies / examples**
IRON AGE TYPES		(MacGregor 1976 unless stated)
Horse gear	Bridle bits (derivative three-link) Terrets (various)	
	Button and loop fasteners	Wild 1970
	Harness strap junctions and mounts	
Swords	Group IV swords	Stead 2006
	Suspension rings	MacGregor 1976, nos 15–17; for revised identification see Stead 2006, no. 203
Jewellery	Beaded torcs	Hunter forthcoming
	Wraxall-type collars	Megaw 1971
Vessels	Tankard handles Zoomorphic vessel mounts Sheet mounts (‘casket ornament’)	
ROMAN TYPES WITH CELTIC ORNAMENT		
Brooches*	Dragonesque	(see Table 8.3 for brooch references)
	Trumpet and variants	
	Headstud Aesica	
	Bow and fantail	
	Disc with triskele ornament	
Other jewellery	Hinged bracelets	MacGregor 1976, 102–3; Cool 1986
Vessels	Trullae	Wainwright 1967, 85–8
	Dippers/strainers	Watkin 1883, 228
	Enamelled vessels	Casey and Hoffmann 1995, fig. 3
Other	Seal boxes	Bateson 1981, 48–50
	Military belt plates	Chapman 2005, 112–3, Sd07 and 11; Croom 2003, 211 no. 12
	Decorative studs	e.g. Webster 1974, 123, fig. 44 no. 20; Allason-Jones and Miket 1984, no. 3.6
	Trompetenmuster developments	Megaw and Megaw 2001, 238

*Table 8.1. The main types of Iron Age objects found in Roman Britain, and Romano-British objects with Celtic-style decoration. *Note: other brooch types occasionally show Celtic-style ornament, as listed in Table 8.3*

This firmly Romano-British dating leads to a number of questions. Torcs are seen as a quintessentially Iron Age object: what are we to make of these late examples? In truth the type now looks very Romano-British – a development from and transformation of the earlier indigenous idea of torcs. Rather than the elite examples, primarily in gold, known from the late Iron Age, the use of copper alloy (and the fairly mundane decoration) suggest these beaded torcs were rather more socially widespread, although their occurrence in hoards indicates they were still valued. They can be seen as a development of local styles in the Roman period, creating a distinctively Roman-British object. They are not found across Roman Britain, being all but unknown in the south; but equally they are not solely a product of the developing culture of the military zone which is explored below. Rather, they are a widespread regional type.

These beaded torcs can be fitted into a wider picture of Romano-British neck ornaments. A hybrid from Dinnington (S Yorks) provides a link to the Wraxall class of hinged collars (Beswick et al. 1990; Megaw 1971). These have much more ‘Celtic’ decoration, and their more restricted distribution in south-west England is broadly complementary to that of beaded torcs (Figure 8.2). Although the collars are poorly dated, they seem to be contemporary with beaded torcs. This points to the existence of a series of regional types of neck ornaments, developed from earlier concepts of torcs, across and indeed beyond Roman Britain, but conspicuously absent from the south-east.

A different trajectory is seen with hinged bracelets. The key piece here is the gold hinged strap bracelet from Rhayader, Powys. Cool (1986) has argued that the type is derived from Hellenistic and Roman parallels but was made in Britain – and tellingly, the terminals feature an enamelled trumpet scroll motif. This indicates the adaptation of imported forms into local traditions, and can be linked to a series of copper alloy hinged strap bracelets, mostly with Celtic-style ornament (MacGregor 1976, 102–3). Apart from serving to show the active modification of imported prototypes, the Rhayader find shows that this indigenous survival found its way at times into precious metalwork as well, implying objects of some status.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■□ Beaded torc (A / B)
● Hinged collar
▲ Hybrid

Figure 8.2. Distribution of beaded torcs and hinged collars. Drawn by Alan Braby

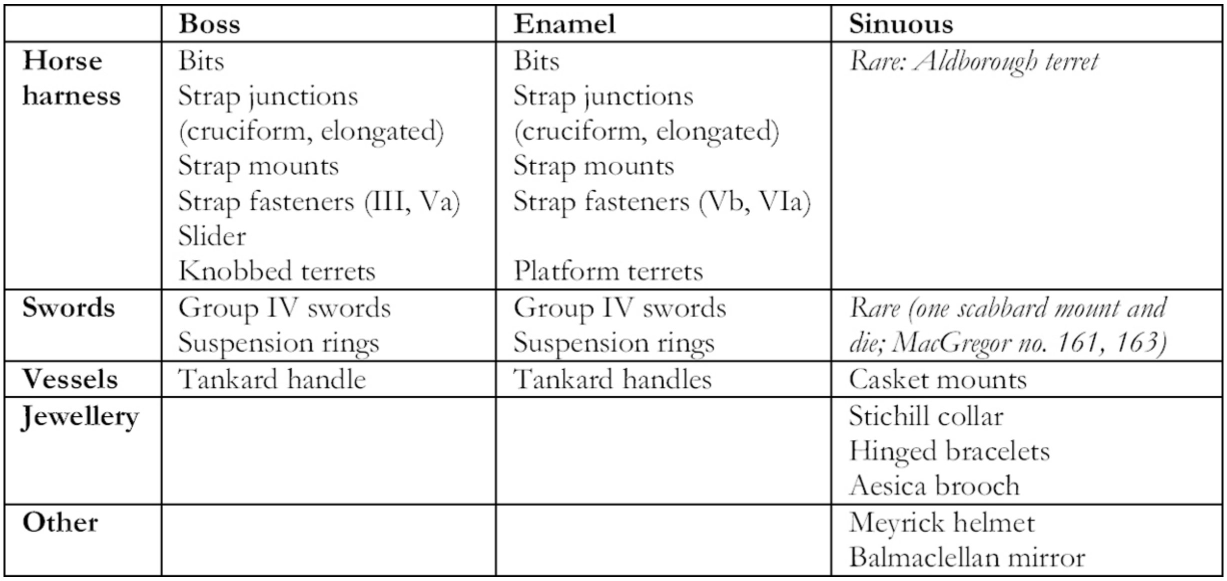
Questions of style

We can now turn to the question of style. For central and northern Britain, the analysis of Morna MacGregor (1976) provides a valuable guide. While embedded in diffusionist perspectives and prone to art-historical sequencing on little hard evidence, she did isolate a plausible series of four main traditions within this material, all of late Iron Age date. Stripped of her use of 'schools' and areas / tribes, these may be defined as:

- North of the Forth, the 'massive metalwork' tradition of north-east Scotland; this falls outwith our remit here.
- 'Boss style' (following Leeds 1933, 54–5, 110), characterised by boss ornament, petals and slender conjoined trumpets.
- A style using polychrome enamelling, generally in small, simple fields, along with slender trumpets in fairly simple arrangements.
- A style making use of more sinuous flared trumpets, berried rosettes, swash-N motifs, broken-back scrolls and die-stamping.

The latter three are of prime concern here. The existence of these three reasonably well-defined traditions allows us to consider questions of their interrelations and use. MacGregor saw them as geographically separate, albeit overlapping, with the boss style in lowland Scotland, polychrome enamelling among the northern Brigantes and the sinuous style among the southern Brigantes. In fact, the evidence can sustain a different interpretation. The boss and polychrome enamel styles broadly co-occur, with a strong focus north of the Humber and south of the Forth (Hunter 2007, fig. 2). They also share a closely similar range of products, with a focus on horse harness (and to a lesser extent weapons), as Table 8.2 indicates. By contrast, they share almost nothing in terms of product range with the sinuous tradition, which is found more on vessels and jewellery. The split between these traditions seems in origin to be a technological one: whereas the products of the boss and enamel styles are overwhelmingly cast, the sinuous style is found predominantly on sheet-work, such as the Meyrick helmet, the Balmaclellan mirror mounts, the Elmswell plaque, and the Plunton Castle and Thirst House Cave bracelets (Jackson 1995; MacGregor 1976, nos 189, 211–2, 273, 336). There are exceptions: the style of the Aldborough terret and Aesica brooch relate them to these pieces, though they are cast (MacGregor 1976, nos 61, 251; Bishop 1996, 6). However, the root difference between these traditions was one of technology, with a predominantly sheet-working tradition contrasting with the two casting traditions.

Such metalwork is commonplace on Iron Age, Roman military and Romano-British sites (Hunter 2007, fig. 5; ‘Roman Iron Age’ is used for material from southern Scotland, and ‘Romano-British’ for non-military sites to the south, but with acknowledgement that the fluctuating frontier makes it dangerous to draw simplistic oppositions). It is no surprise to find this material on either an indigenous site (within or beyond the frontier) or a Roman fort in the area. Indeed, there are few forts dug on any scale which have failed to produce ‘indigenous’ finds: of the fifty or so Roman forts and fortlets in Scotland which have seen (very varying) degrees of investigation, around a third have produced Celtic-style metalwork. It does not occur in large numbers, but this is equally true of most small finds apart from brooches; this is sufficient to indicate that this Celtic-style material was a part of everyday life.



	Boss	**Enamel**	**Sinuous**
Horse harness	Bits Strap junctions (cruciform, elongated) Strap mounts Strap fasteners (III, Va) Slider Knobbed terrets	Bits Strap junctions (cruciform, elongated) Strap mounts Strap fasteners (Vb, VIa) Platform terrets	*Rare: Aldborough terret*
Swords	Group IV swords Suspension rings	Group IV swords Suspension rings	*Rare (one scabbard mount and die; MacGregor no. 161, 163)*
Vessels	Tankard handle	Tankard handles	Casket mounts
Jewellery			Stichill collar Hinged bracelets Aesica brooch
Other			Meyrick helmet Balmaclellan mirror

Table 8.2. Comparison of the products of the main three central British LA metalworking traditions. Fastener types refer to Wild (1970)

The dominance on military sites may well be misleading, as the traditional military emphasis of frontier archaeology means there is not a lot else to compare to. Celtic-style material is certainly found beyond the forts – where excavation is extensive, it occurs in some quantity, as at Shiptonthorpe, E Yorks (Allason-Jones 2006), and it is seen also on a wide range of sites further south, including villas and urban centres (e.g. Atkinson 1942, pl. 51 no. A342; Neal 1996, fig. 32 no. 21; Cooper 1999, 276–7, fig. 134 no 188). However, this material was clearly in common use by the military as well as among indigenous settlements. This was not just a matter of consumption, but also of the production of such material in a range of cultural contexts: Roman military, Romano-British, and Iron Age power centres (Hunter 2007, 294, note 5).

So how should we interpret this material found within and beyond the frontier, in military, civilian and 'barbarian' contexts? The same objects were being interpreted and used in different cultural settings. In the Iron Age world, such decorative metalwork can be interpreted as the dominant way of expressing ideas of status, power and identity in material culture, and it probably continued in this role into the Roman period. Such metalwork also became a significant feature on fort sites, although in the much more varied visual environment of a Roman fort this ornamental material was less preeminent. However, as argued above, it was not insignificant. Instead, alongside the developing styles to be considered below, I suggest it played a key role in defining the changing culture of the frontier at a time of flux. It was an influence drawn from the local surroundings and incorporated into a military environment. Its widespread nature suggests this is not simply a matter of local recruitment or auxiliary taste, but represents adoption and adaptation of a local style by the military. Of course, the military still presented a distinctive identity compared to the rest of the population, who themselves embodied various views and uses of this material; but these finds represent a link running through and across the frontier zone. It seems inevitable that they will have been used and seen differently by different groups, with their significance and meaning varying (see Hunter 2007, 291–3 for further discussion). As the styles became current more widely in the frontier zone, they became embedded in the emerging frontier cultures; for many users, it is likely they were interpreted not as 'Celtic' but as 'frontier', their indigenous origins increasingly obscured as they were more broadly adopted. The way in which the military in particular adopted not only weaponry but dress styles and fittings from local populations is well-attested on other frontiers (James 2006).

Making new things

The Iron Age types found in Roman Britain were not simply heirlooms or curios. As the example of hinged bracelets indicated, we are not dealing with the afterlife of Celtic art, but with a thriving craft tradition which was responding to changed circumstances. This can be seen in the reaction to new forms of artefact and new artistic stimuli. Adaptability is seen in the existence of morphological hybrids, as with terrets, where a number have Celtic-style decorated hoops with typically Roman-style fittings (e.g. Spratling 1971; Cooper 1999, 276–7, fig. 134 no. 188 (misidentified)). Button-and-loop fasteners are another good example – a number show the adoption of strongly Roman imagery, notably ones from Newstead, the Perth area and Castleford which appear to represent bunches of grapes (MacGregor 1976, nos 254, 256; Bishop 1998, fig. 24 no. 280).

Type	**Decoration**	**Key references/examples**
Dragonesque	Enamel (mostly geometric); boss	Feachem 1951, 1968
Trumpet and variants	Enamel (curvilinear)	Bateson 1981, 26–8; Bayley and Butcher 2004, 163–4
	Moulded decoration • Wales, W England (Carmarthen type) • N England/S Scotland (simple lyre-pattern head mouldings) • Complex fantail variant, N England	• Boon and Savory 1975; Mackreth 1985, 293 • Mackreth 1990, 92–4 • Snape 1993, no. 42; 1994, no. 1; Hattatt 1989, no. 1537
	Incised (and inlaid) decoration	Thompson 1963; Atkinson 1942, 205–7, fig. 37
Headstud	Conjoined trumpets around headstud	e.g. Painter and Sax 1970, nos 6, 9
	Enamelling	e.g. MacGregor 1976, fig. 5.4–5; Dearne and Parsons 1997, 62, fig. 6 no. 37
	Relief decoration on head	e.g. Mackreth 1996, 301–2, fig. 94 no. 12; Bayley and Butcher 2004, 164–5, fig. 136
Aesica	Symmetrical raised trumpet	Collingwood and Richmond 1969,

	decoration (one, from Aesica, with sinuous decoration)	fig. 105 nos 92–3; Hattatt 1989, no. 1476
Bow and fantail	Enamel with reserved pelta (E Midlands concentration)	Bayley and Butcher 2004, 168 *Lucerna* 27 (2004), 19
Polden Hill	Openwork catchplate ornament	e.g. Callander 1918, 26–8
	Relief bow decoration	e.g. Webster 2003a
Disc with triskele	Repoussé triskele (concentrated in Hadrian's Wall and hinterland)	Bayley and Butcher 2004, 173, 260, fig. 174; Webster 1986, 51–2
	Enamelled triskele (mostly southern)	Laing 2005, 150; Bateson 1981, 40
Trompetenmuster		e.g. Snape 1993, nos 133–4; Hattatt 1989, fig. 76

Table 8.3. Main brooch types with Celtic ornament. There is additionally a range of less common variants (e.g. a localised group of trumpet brooches from Wroxeter with a trumpet-decorated headloop, or a few enamelled pelta brooches; Webster 2003b, 297–8, fig. 8.1 no. 12; Hattatt 1985, 170, no. 605). Celtic-style designs also feature on a number of unusual or hybrid examples, probably individual commissions or local styles. This trend is well-illustrated by Hattatt's collection: e.g. enamelled Polden Hill with swash-N motif; T-shaped with enamelled S; dolphin with openwork catchplate bearing moulded decoration (Hattatt 1985, nos 377, 405; 1989, 370, no. 1390); note also an unusual rectangular plate brooch with swash-N from Shiptonthorpe (Allason-Jones 2006, fig. 10.2 no. 70)

However, this living tradition is seen most clearly in the making of new kinds of things; creations which reacted to Roman objects and produced something new as a result. Sometimes this took the form of draping Celtic art on a selected range of new canvases, such as seal boxes and buckles (Bateson 1981, 48–50; Chapman 2005, 112–3). More interesting is the alteration and response in both form and decoration to create hybrids, as seen in hinged strap bracelets (above) and most clearly in brooches. The existence of distinctively Romano-British brooches has long been recognised, with the influence of indigenous art drawn out clearly by Collingwood (1930). The major types are those which he delineated, but we can add some more detailed definition (Table 8.3; Figure 8.3).

Most of these fit into the central British Roman Iron Age styles (Table 8.4): in a development of local metal-working traditions, existing indigenous styles were applied to these new forms of metalwork. These brooches are not high-status items; they were widely spread and widely used, indicating a persistent demand for these styles into the later second century. However, on occasion the workshops were called on to produce more spectacular pieces. The best example of a ‘status brooch’ is undoubtedly one from the Aesica hoard, covered in sinuous decoration, where the Celtic tradition is very much to the fore. Another good example is the massive variant of a trumpet brooch, with delicate slender trumpet decoration on the head, from Perthshire (Callander 1918). Like the Aesica brooch it serves as a reminder of the continuing role of Celtic art at the grandiose end of the brooch spectrum.

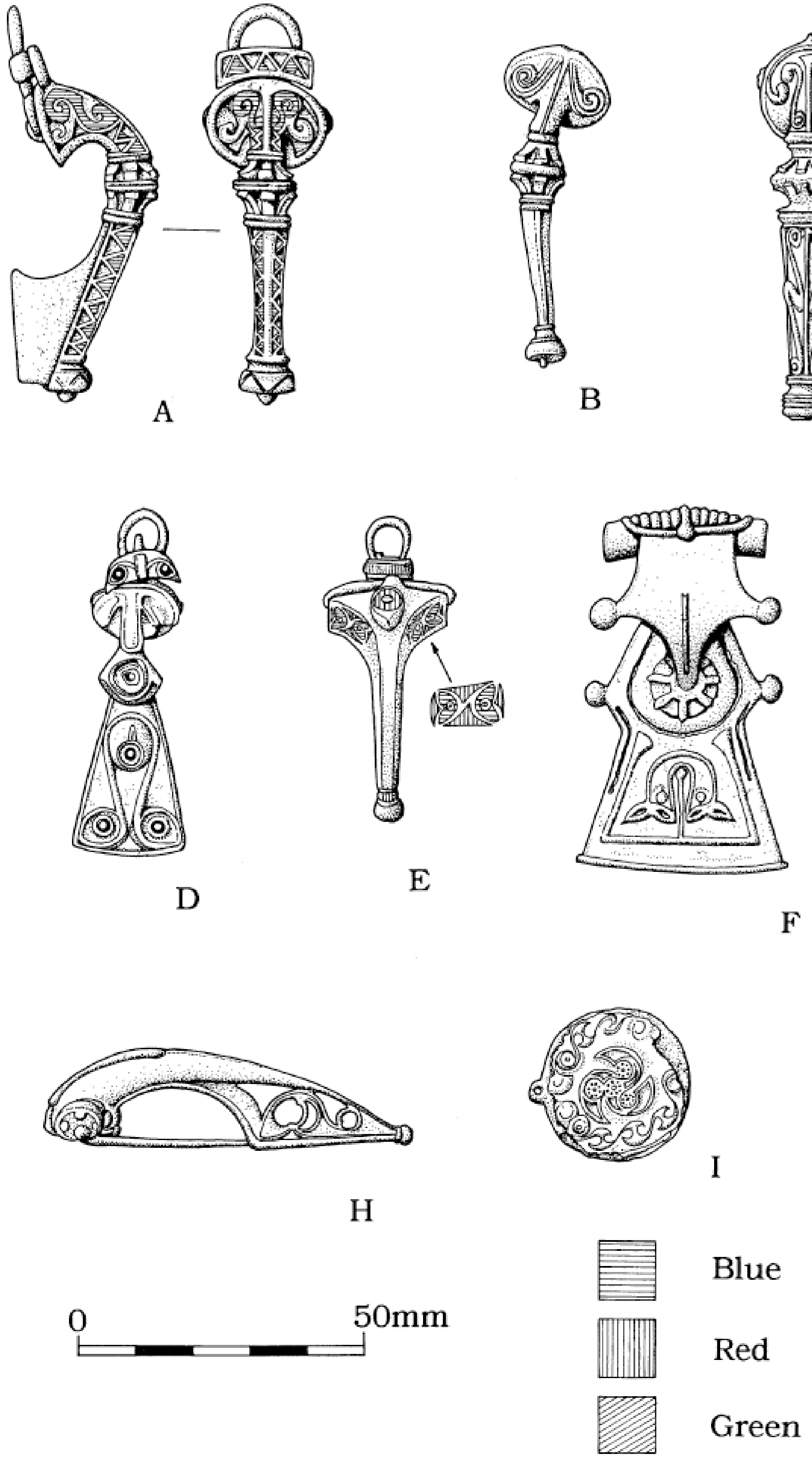

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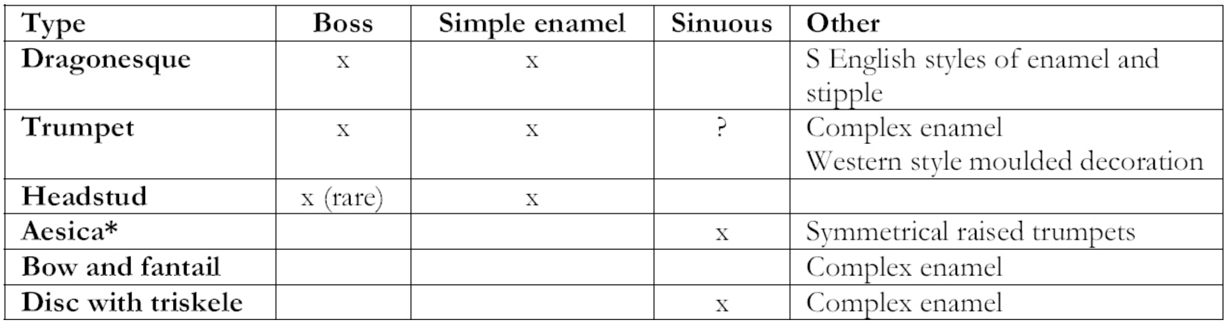
Figure 8.3. Examples of Romano-British brooches with Celtic-style decoration. (a) Trumpet brooch with enamelled decoration (Inchyra, Perthshire; Hunter 1996, fig 3). (b) Trumpet brooch with northern-style moulded decoration (Co. Durham; Hattatt 1985, no 434). (c) Trumpet brooch with western-style moulded decoration (Peters-field, Hants; Hattatt 1985, no 431). (d) Trumpet and fantail brooch (South Shields, Co. Durham; Snape 1994, no 1). (e) Headstud brooch with teardrop decoration and enamelled swash-N motif (Corbridge, Northumberland; MacGregor 1976, fig 5.4). (f) Aesica brooch (Hook Norton, Oxfordshire; Collingwood and Richmond 1969, fig 105 no 92). (g) Bow and fantail brooch (South Yorkshire; Dearne and Parsons 1997, fig 6 no 38). (h) Polden Hill brooch with openwork decoration (Polmaise, Stirlingshire; MacGregor 1976, fig 5.1). (i) Disc brooch with repoussé triskele (unprovenanced; MacGregor 1976, fig 5.7). (j) Disc brooch with enamelled triskele (Wanborough, Wilts; Anderson et al 2001, fig 26 no 132). Redrawn from the sources noted by Alan Braby



Type	Boss	Simple enamel	Sinuous	Other
Dragonesque	x	x		S English styles of enamel and stipple
Trumpet	x	x	?	Complex enamel Western style moulded decoration
Headstud	x (rare)	x		
Aesica*			x	Symmetrical raised trumpets
Bow and fantail				Complex enamel
Disc with triskele			x	Complex enamel

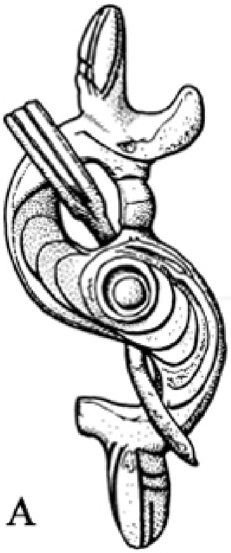
*Table 8.4. Main Romano-British brooch types considered in terms of Celtic art styles. *NB: the eponymous Aesica brooch, decorated in northern sinuous style, seems a clearly northern product, but it is atmarked variance with other (southern) members of the series*

Within these traditions there is evidence of regional variation, especially in trumpet brooches (Table 8.3). Here one group with Celtic-style decoration flourished in western England and Wales, and another in northern England and southern Scotland. The western group often produced silver brooches, again emphasising these were rather out of the ordinary. The best example is one from Carmarthen (Boon and Savory 1975), a fine example of a status object drawing on indigenous styles to make an impression. As with the northern brooches, the styles here echo local artistic traditions, with parallels to the decoration on Wraxall-type collars.

Dissecting dragonesques

We can take this theme further with the case of the dragonesque brooch. This is a favourite for students of both Celtic art and Roman Britain, a regular cover-shot for books and ever-popular on the antiquities market. Most commentaries are based on Feachem's valuable overviews (Feachem 1951; 1968) with Jundi and Hill's (1998) consideration of the type a valuable recent perspective. There has been no published synthesis of this material since 1968, but, while I would not claim a comprehensive list, from published sources and the Portable Antiquities Scheme over 200 brooches are now known.

With this expanded dataset, the classification becomes much clearer, and previously unique brooches are now much better represented. The type will be discussed in more detail elsewhere (Hunter forthcoming), but the main division is between enamelled and non-enamelled types. The enamelled brooches predominate, forming about two-thirds of the total, and may be seen as products of the central British enamelling tradition. This is reinforced by a few instances which incorporate trumpet decoration in the design (e.g. Hunter 1994, figs 2–3). It was already clear from Feachem's publications that the nonenamelled brooches include a number ornamented in boss-and-trumpet style, but they were drowned out by the more common enamelled ones. However, their number has been markedly expanded by recent finds. They occur in both openwork versions and solid, with a similar range of designs; as Figure 8.4 indicates, these are straight from the repertoire of the boss-and-trumpet tradition, and include some very elegant compositions. The two main types of dragonesque thus fall into the main metalworking traditions of the north. Also of interest are the hybrids and unusual specimens, as these show something of the creative process. I know of two examples with non-northern styles of decoration. One has a version of south-east English enamelling familiar from crescentic terrets (Hattatt 1987, 167, fig. 54, no. 1026), while the other, from Well, N Yorks, uses stippled decoration, again a southern technique (Hunter in prep.).



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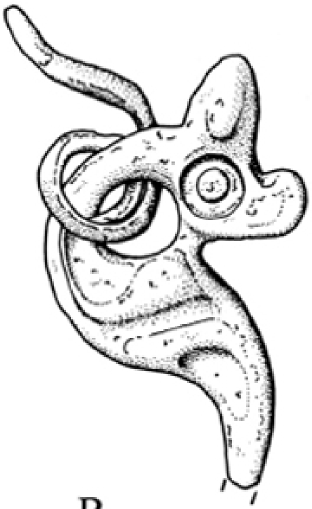

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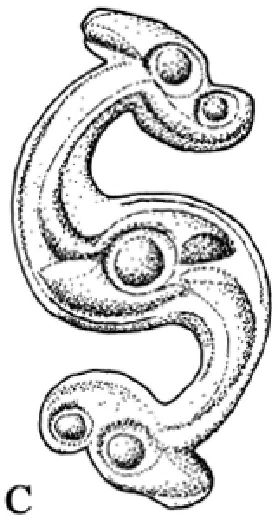

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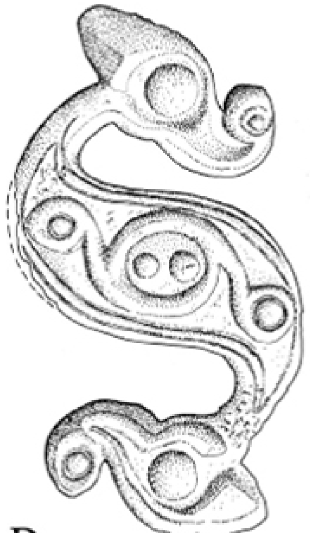

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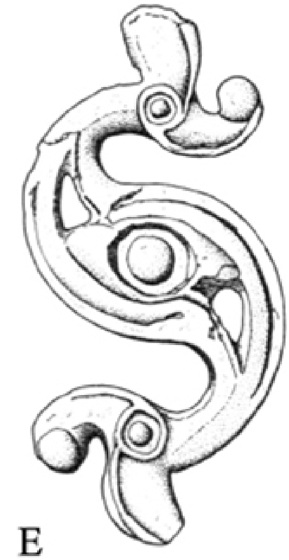

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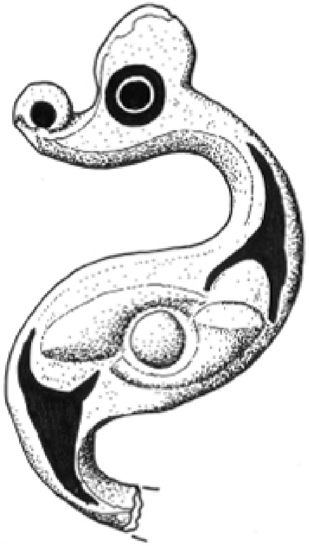

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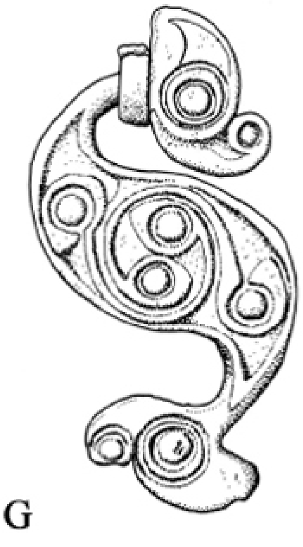

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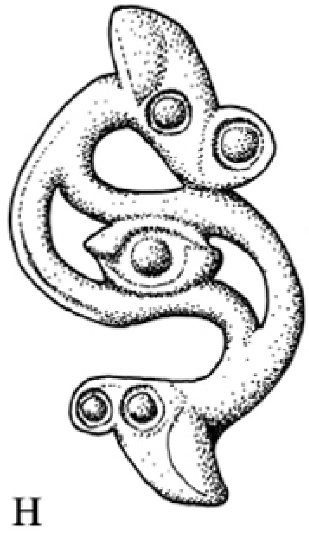

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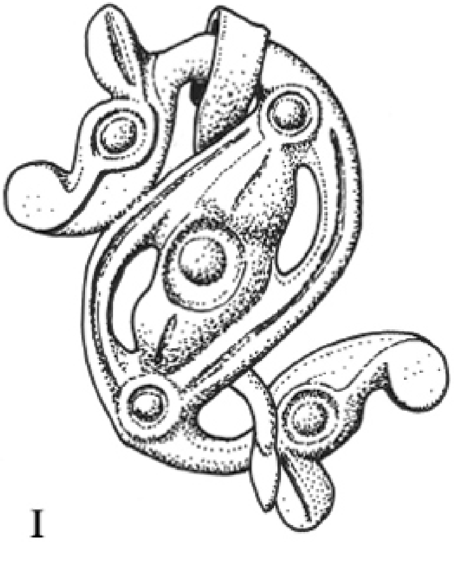

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*Figure 8.4. Dragonesque brooches with boss-and-trumpet decoration. NB not to scale; taken from publications or PAS images except those marked *, drawn from the original. (a) *E Ness, E Yorks (NCL-4F6884); (b) *Driffield, E Yorks (NCL-9700A8); (c) Leyburn, E Yorks (LANCUM-AFF133); (d) Elwick, Cleveland (NCL-EAB477); (e) *Norham, Northumberland (NCL-3EABCO); (f) Clitheroe, Lancs (LANCUM-411 DE2); (g) Christies London,* Antiquities *13.12.88, lot 198; (h) Edinburgh Castle, Midlothian (Mackreth 1997, fig 120.3); (i) Brantingham, E Yorks (YORYM-A580A5). Drawn by Alan Braby*

The dragonesque brooch thus provides a good example of the development of a Romano-British form, the continuity and development of indigenous art styles on a new canvas, and experimentation in other styles. It was a successful and popular brooch. But what did it mean? With an object which was (to our eyes) so obviously linked to indigenous traditions, can we see any patterns in its use? Was it particularly popular in particular areas, or with particular social groups? Was it a symbol of ‘non-military, non-Roman identity’ as Jundi and Hill (1998, 134) have suggested? Wider studies have certainly showed significant patterns in brooch preferences; for instance, Celtic-style brooches enjoyed a disproportionate popularity on the edge of the frontier and beyond (Hunter 1996, 121–3). Can a more detailed consideration of the dragonesque throw any more subtle light on this? With the diversity of types, are there any differential preferences being expressed?

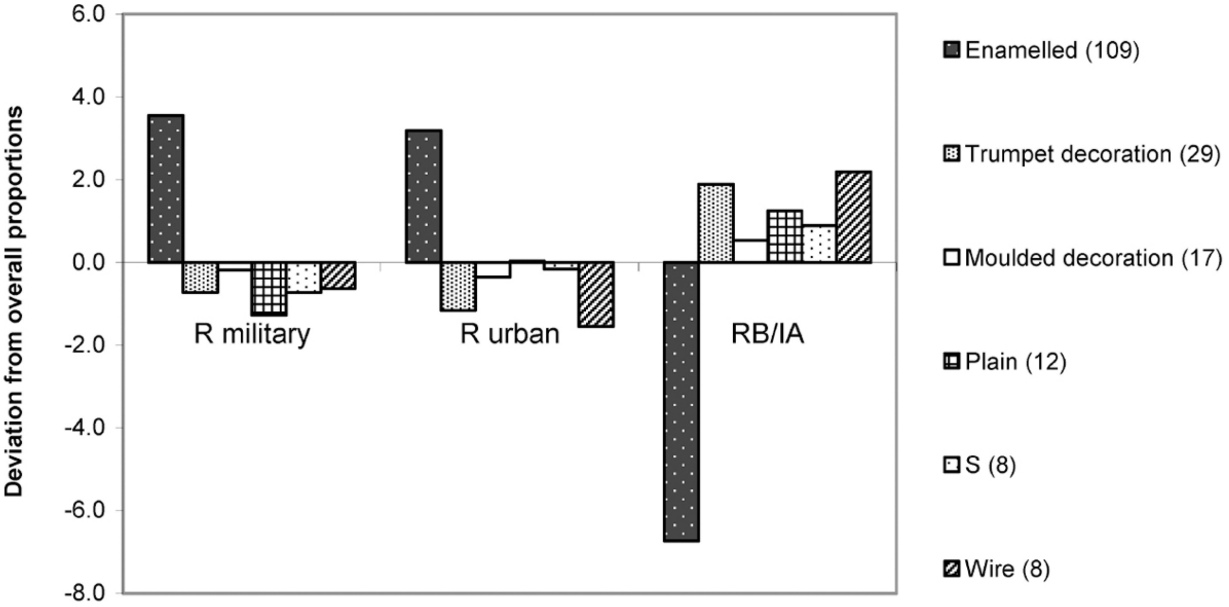

Figure 8.5. Comparison of the overall dragonesque brooch assemblage from Roman (R) military, urban, and rural/Iron Age (RB/IA) sites, expressed as a deviation from the proportions of the different types in the overall data set. The units are the number of brooches above or below the expected total. Moulded decoration comprises ribs or bars, but not trumpets which are recorded separately. With the S-shaped, plain and wire brooches, only small numbers are known and the variations are less robust, but this should not be a problem with the larger samples

To investigate these questions, the brooches were divided according to general site type and their numbers compared to the expected proportions from the overall representation of different types in the total database (Figure 8.5). The quantity known from military sites indicates that they cannot be seen as ‘non-military, non-Roman’; rather, they represent the modified identity of the military and others on the frontier. However, there is an interesting difference – enamelled brooches are markedly more popular on military and urban sites than they are on rural/native ones. This is not a picture of exclusion – more or less all brooch types are found on all site types – but of patterns of preference. Interestingly, this is not part of a general preference for ‘boss style’ on native / rural sites, as horse harness in boss style is very common on military sites. It is thus nothing so simple as a single style being preferred, but more subtle patterns of preference – although further work is required to tease out the reasons behind these patterns.

Reading the designs

A final area to consider is the varied relations of such Celtic styles to Classical art. A good example is the series of copper alloy vessels (primarily skillets and flasks) and vessel mounts bearing enamelled decoration. This includes everything from very Classical motifs (such as the wreaths, vine scroll and hunt scenes typical of the skillets) to very Celtic ones (on a series of hexagonal flasks, known from Corbridge, Vindolanda, Dinorben and Carmarthen: Casey and Hoffmann 1995, 24; unpub; Gardner and Savory 1964, 148–9, fig. 19.10, pl. XXXIV.4; James 2003, fig. 8.4 no. 57).

Of particular interest are the pieces where some fusion of the traditions is evident. The classic example is the plaque from Elmswell (E Yorks; Corder and Hawkes 1940). Here the sinuous Celtic scrolling may be read as a complement to the enamelled Classical vine scroll above. In contrast, and more complex, is the Ilam pan (Staffs). Full study of this is still in progress, but initial commentators were struck by the Celtic decoration (Burnham et al. 2004, 326, 344–5). Yet the situation is more complex. When first viewed, the triskele pattern seems dominant, but if we consider the reserved metal rather than the surviving enamelling, suddenly a vegetal scroll is the dominant motif. The triskele was actually rather more hidden when the pan was fresh, as the enamel served to dissolve the motif, with single colour blocks spreading across the roundels in several cases to follow the curves of the scroll. Yet the triskele is still there. This complex, creative fusion, capable of multiple readings, is a fine exemplar of the best of the surviving Celtic (or Romano-British traditions), drawing on older traditions and more recent stimuli to create new and complex art.

Conclusions

The complexities and pitfalls which await anyone trying to understand Celtic art are well known. I have tried in this paper to put this interesting late flourishing of the tradition into a more complex context than has been the case before; to make it more complicated, with more snares for our studies. The arguments are still at an early stage, but I hope it provides some potential routes. This material should not be seen as a poor relation to other groups of Celtic art, nor an insignificant byline in the study of Romano-British art. It played a key role in the developing cultures of central Britain in the crucial first two centuries AD, and continues to pose tantalising problems, especially in the integration of this indigenous material into the lifestyles of the army and the wider province. Rather than expressing any non-Roman or non-military identity, or being a rejection of Rome, its prevalence in military contexts suggests instead it played a role in forging a new identity – that the army became linked to a wider frontier culture. The material adapted to these circumstances, changing and responding to changed times to decorate new objects and create new forms of material culture. There are also signs of regional variety (e.g. in the different brooch types in western England and Wales, and in neck ornaments); and hints of more subtle choices being expressed in the selection of objects, as the dragonesque example indicated. These are areas where more detailed study is required.

Many questions remain. There is similar material, albeit less frequent, from southern sites which merits attention; and the development of the late Iron Age art styles such as the complex enamelling which Hutcheson (2004) has considered in Norfolk, needs further work. And why does this tradition end – or does it? What role does the appearance of trompetenmuster ornament from the mid second century onwards play in the development of the tradition, and how does this link to the later Celtic art which flourished in the post-Roman period (Laing 2005)? There is material enough here to keep scholars busy, frustrated and enthused for some time to come …

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Sally Worrell for information on dragonesques and beaded torcs from the Portable Antiquities Scheme, Richard Brewer for the photo of the Little Orme mounts, Ralph Jackson for the chance to see the Ilam pan at first-hand, Simon James for some stimulating thoughts on parallels from other frontiers, and to the organisers and participants for a highly stimulating seminar.

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9

Material, style and identity in first century AD metalwork, with particular reference to the Seven Sisters Hoard

Mary Davis and Adam Gwilt

Introduction **(Mary Davis and Adam Gwilt)**

‘Celtic’ (or native) and Roman artefacts have usually been categorised by art historians on the basis of their style, or alternatively by scientists according to their material composition. Surprisingly, few have attempted to interpret the combined complexities of material *and* style.

During the first century AD, there was an enormous influx of new technologies and materials acquired through trade and by the invasion of the Roman army. At this time of acculturation and change, La Tène art was made and used in Britain, and its style continued to develop (or devolve). When both the style and material of decorated metalwork are examined, a complex picture emerges, highlighting a degree of ‘hybridisation’. Supposedly ‘native’ styles and supposedly ‘Roman’ materials (e.g. brass) are used simultaneously and deposited within the same hoards, for example the Seven Sisters and Melsonby (Stanwick) hoards. As a consequence, questions arise relating to how much materials and objects were linked with native or tribal identities.

The specific historical narrative of this period must inevitably come into play: the confrontation of native Iron Age peoples, for example the Iceni, Silures and Brigantes with the Roman army are well known. In these regions, and others, there was strong and prolonged resistance and the clash of cultures became established and entrenched. Traditional yet evolving native styles and technologies were developing in response to a massive invading force, which itself brought an influx of materials, technologies and artisans. How much were these new technologies and materials being appropriated and fitted into ‘old’ ideas of wealth, status, prestige, ideology and artefact use? First indications suggest a distinct homogeneity and quality in the type of metal used for native metalwork, in contrast with early Romano-British artefacts, where scrap metal was almost certainly reused to produce a wide range of less specific alloys.

This paper looks specifically at the Seven Sisters hoard, deposited during the period of Campaigning of the Roman army with the Silures tribe in south Wales on the western frontier of Britain. This is one of a similar group of metalwork hoards buried across Britain at around this time, for example those from Polden Hills, Saham Toney, Melsonby and Middlebie. Also from Wales, it is argued that the Pentyrch and Tal-y-Llyn hoards containing decorated metalwork (though here containing ironwork and shields respectively, and here with less emphasis on horse equipment) were deposited at around the same time. An important question therefore, is how much unity or regional divergence there was across Britain at this time, demonstrated through changing style, art and technology. Were ‘hybridised’ artefacts being produced for regional leaders and local vying elites? Here, the Seven Sisters hoard illustrates how a range of material and stylistic changes were occurring and how a similar pattern is discernible in western Britain, northern Britain and East Anglia between AD 50–75. These changes, particularly apparent upon horse equipment and vessels, are also witnessed upon weapons and larger items of personal adornment. Therefore, this hoard has broad significance for the characterisation and chronology of the late La Tène art style in Britain.

In considering the apparent motivation for creation and the geography of use, the name *Native Campaigning Art* is proposed for this material, until a more accurate or satisfactory one may be found. The impetus behind this metalwork is seen (initially at least) as a selective native or Iron Age appropriation of Roman materials and technologies, rather than a controlling Roman dilution of an Iron Age style.

The first half of this paper focuses on the combined material and stylistic attributes of the Seven Sisters hoard and the potential for wider interpretation and further analytical research. The second part outlines the chronological context for the Seven Sisters hoard, while also illustrating some emerging stylistic trends in La Tène decorated metalwork between AD 40–100.

The Seven Sisters hoard: relationships between technology, style and function (Mary Davis)

Introduction

The Seven Sisters hoard consists of 37 pieces of metal work that were discovered in 1875. The artefacts were initially extensively reported on and illustrated by Romilly Allen in 1905, and then re-evaluated by Davies and Spratling (1976) who reinvestigated the hoard's discovery as well as the artefacts themselves. Within the hoard there is both Roman and native British material, plus several ingots, casting jets and pieces of 'scrap' metal which are less easily categorised by style or period (Figure 9.1).

The first account of the discovery and content of the hoard was published by Romilly Allen in 1905. It was found by children in a streambed in 1875, following a storm and flood, then kept in the possession of a farming family in the Dulais Valley. The find-spot is situated near Seven Sisters, northeast of Neath. It was not until 1902 that the finds were purchased (by a local antiquarian Dr W Bickerton Edwards) and donated to the Welsh Museum of Natural History, Arts and Antiquities, Cardiff, the immediate predecessor of the National Museum of Wales. In 1927, a relative of Edwards, offered a previously unknown strap-union from this hoard to the British Museum (Brailsford 1953, 62 and plate XI.2). It remains possible that further items from the hoard have remained unfound, lost or not reported. Davies and Spratling reviewed the circumstances of the hoard's deposition but despite their best efforts to re-establish the find-spot (Davies and Spratling 1976, 123–5 and Fig. 2), there is still some doubt as to its precise location.

Davies and Spratling (1976) divided the hoard into three categories: Roman, native British and Roman or native (and considered the last group to be predominantly native). The Roman material consists mainly of military equipment of which the strap union (Appendix 9.1: 04.130), and the tinned disc (Appendix 9.1: 04.143), which is part of a phalera, are the most diagnostic pieces that date to between c. AD 50–75. None of the other objects would be out of place in this time period. The style of the native material (except for the stylistically distinct and 'restrained style' of the pendant hooks), “point to the middle years of the first century A.D. for their manufacture and deposition, which agrees well with the dating of the Roman pieces in the hoard” (Davies and Spratling 1976, 137). For a detailed review of the chronology of the hoard see the second part of this paper.

Functional categories and style

When assessing function, the objects from the hoard have been grouped into four categories:

- Horse equipment consists of items used for horses, chariots and carts, whether these are terrets, strap unions or horse pendants and whether in ‘curvilinear’, ‘geometric’ or Roman style.
- Personal military ornament distinguishes this group of material from other personal decorative ornaments such as torcs, bracelets and brooches – of which there are none in the hoard, and other military material such as that used for horses. This group includes the pendant hooks and helmet crest.
- Feasting and drinking items form a further group; there are five tankard handles from the Seven Sisters hoard, the largest group to have been found together in Britain. Tankard handles often exhibit the highest quality in terms of design and manufacture. It is also likely that the tightly folded pieces of bronze sheet metal are the remains of either drinking vessels or cauldrons.
- Finally there is a group of material that seems to be associated with metalworking: ingots, weights, scrap metal and two casting jets. It is the inclusion of these items from the hoard that have led to discussions as to whether this was a founders hoard, and whether it was deposited by Romans or native Britons (Romilly Allen 1905; Davies and Spratling 1976).

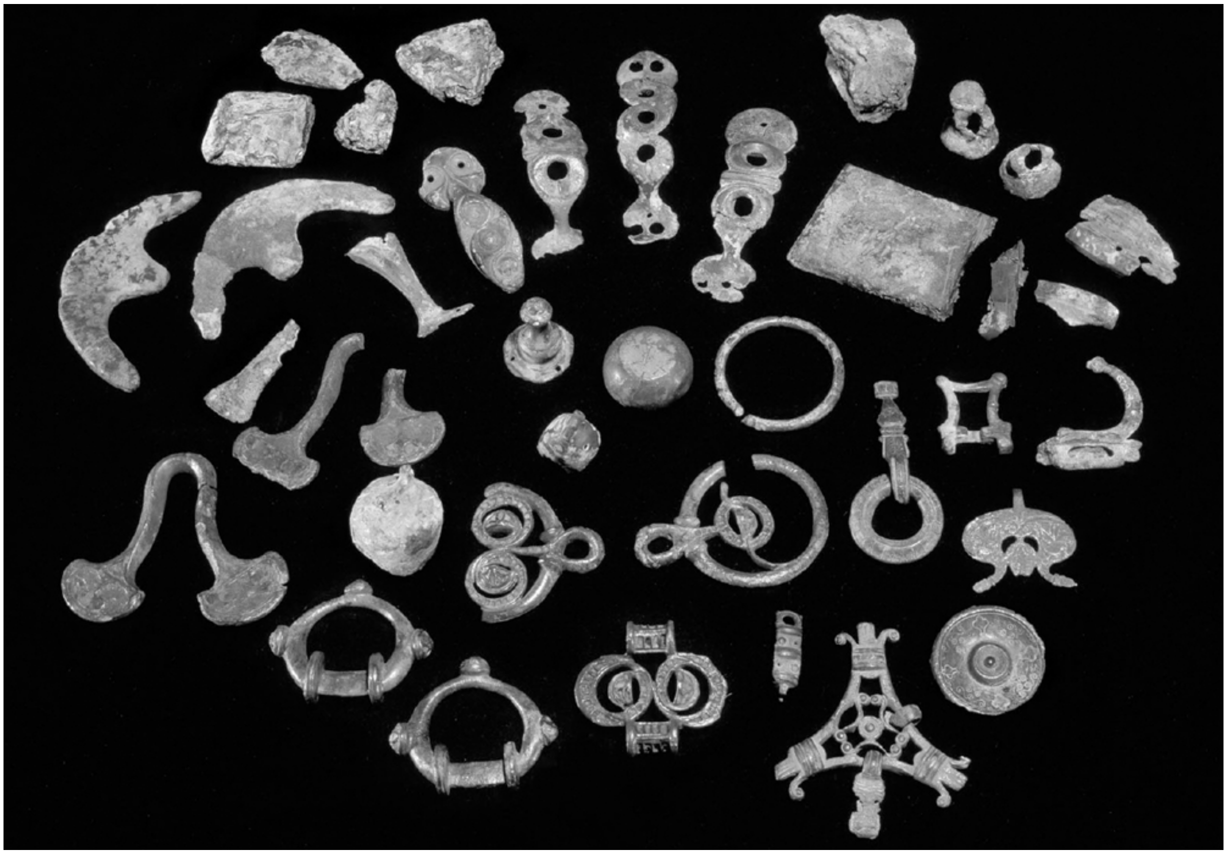


Figure 9.1. The Seven Sisters hoard. Reproduced in colour on page 224

Stylistically, the hoard has been divided into three distinct groups:

- Roman military material, which is mostly military horse equipment, but also contains a buckle.
- ‘Geometric’ native/Iron Age style material, which is all related to horse gear.
- ‘Curvilinear’ La Tène style material, which is composed of objects and scrap related to feasting and drinking and personal military equipment, but not horse equipment.

Both the ‘geometric’ and the ‘curvilinear’ style objects equate to Davies and Spratling’s ‘native British’ material (1976), and are considered Iron Age as opposed to Roman.

Metal alloy composition

Davies and Spratling when assessing the artefacts in their paper state: ‘the limited space available has meant that many of the problematic aspects of the bronzes, which only extensive treatment could hope to resolve, have been merely touched upon, or altogether omitted from the discussion' (Davies and Spratling 1976, 121). They go on to say: 'We use the term 'bronze' throughout this paper in place of the more accurate but more clumsy 'copper-base alloy', although we recognise that several of the pieces may actually be of brass' (Davies and Spratling 1976, 144).

Peter Northover (unpublished) undertook metallurgical analysis on 16 out of the 37 pieces, and this data, generously provided by Northover, contributes significantly to the present study. Further quantitative and qualitative analysis has been done at the National Museum of Wales (NMW) by the author.

Recent assessment and analysis of the composition of the artefacts has been undertaken to see how Roman and native materials compare, but also to look at the compositional differences in stylistically distinct native style artefacts (i.e. 'geometric' and 'curvilinear'). It is now also possible to examine whether function as well as style has a bearing on what metals and decorative techniques were used.

Analysis has shown a range of copper alloys present:

- Bronze: copper and tin, where tin is 5% or more
- Brass: copper and zinc, where zinc is 5% or more
- Impure bronze: mainly tin/copper alloy (over 5% tin) where there is also a small amount of zinc present (approx. 1–3%) and sometimes lead as well.
- Impure brass or 'tin brass' (Northover in Beswick 1990, 22), (over 5% zinc) where there is a small but significant amount of tin (1–3%) and sometimes also lead.
- Pure copper: only trace amounts of other elements present.

(Results will be reported in full elsewhere)

Figure 9.2 shows the proportions in which these various alloys occur. Although the majority of the artefacts are bronze or brass, the overall elemental composition of the hoard is as mixed metallurgically as it is stylistically: bronze, brass and gunmetal, both leaded and unleaded, are all present.

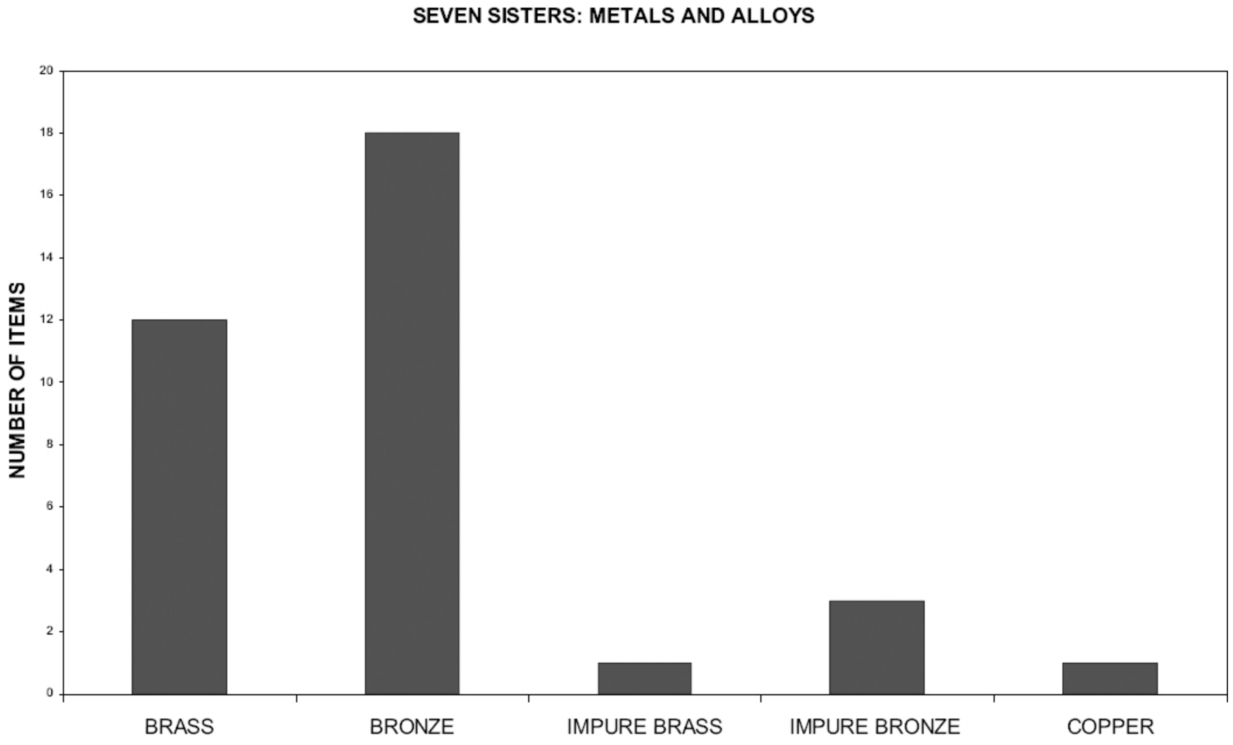


Figure 9.2. Graph showing the metal alloys present in the Seven Sisters hoard

Composition, function and style

Metallurgical analysis can be considered in conjunction with a number of aspects of the objects found within the hoard such as the cultural style of the objects, their function, and the variety of applied decoration. When the alloy composition is plotted against the type of object found, some patterns are evident; most types of object are predominantly made of a specific metal type (Figure 9.3). For example much of the horse harness equipment is brass, whereas the tankard handles and the sheet scrap (vessels) are bronze. In part, the apparent relationship between alloy type and function may reflect stylistic/cultural preferences. Thus, when the Roman and native styles are considered in conjunction with material analysis, a strong correlation is discernible. Iron Age 'curvilinear' material is bronze; 'geometric' material is brass, and the Roman material is mixed: brass, bronze, gunmetal and leaded bronze (Figure 9.4).

The stylistically native artefacts fit into at least two distinct categories: all the horse equipment is brass, with a consistent zinc content of about seventeen percent, and all is decorated with polychrome enamel. The second group of artefacts are either of personal armour (helmet crest, pendant hooks) or related to feasting and drinking in the form of tankard handles or scrap sheet bronze; none are horse equipment. This latter group is all tin bronze with a consistent tin content averaging about twelve per cent; where this material has additional decoration, ‘sealing wax’ red glass is used.

The grouping of the Seven Sisters objects by style, function and composition is striking. Brass is not used for objects of ‘curvilinear’ style; and functionally similar types of object are made from the same alloy (e.g. objects used for feasting and drinking are all bronze). However, the general trend for the manufacture of horse equipment from Wales and elsewhere is broader. In addition to the Seven Sisters ‘geometric’ style pieces, much native horse gear from Wales is made in the ‘curvilinear’ style using bronze, as is one of the horse harness sets from Melsonby (Stanwick) (see below). Further study and analysis of trends are needed.

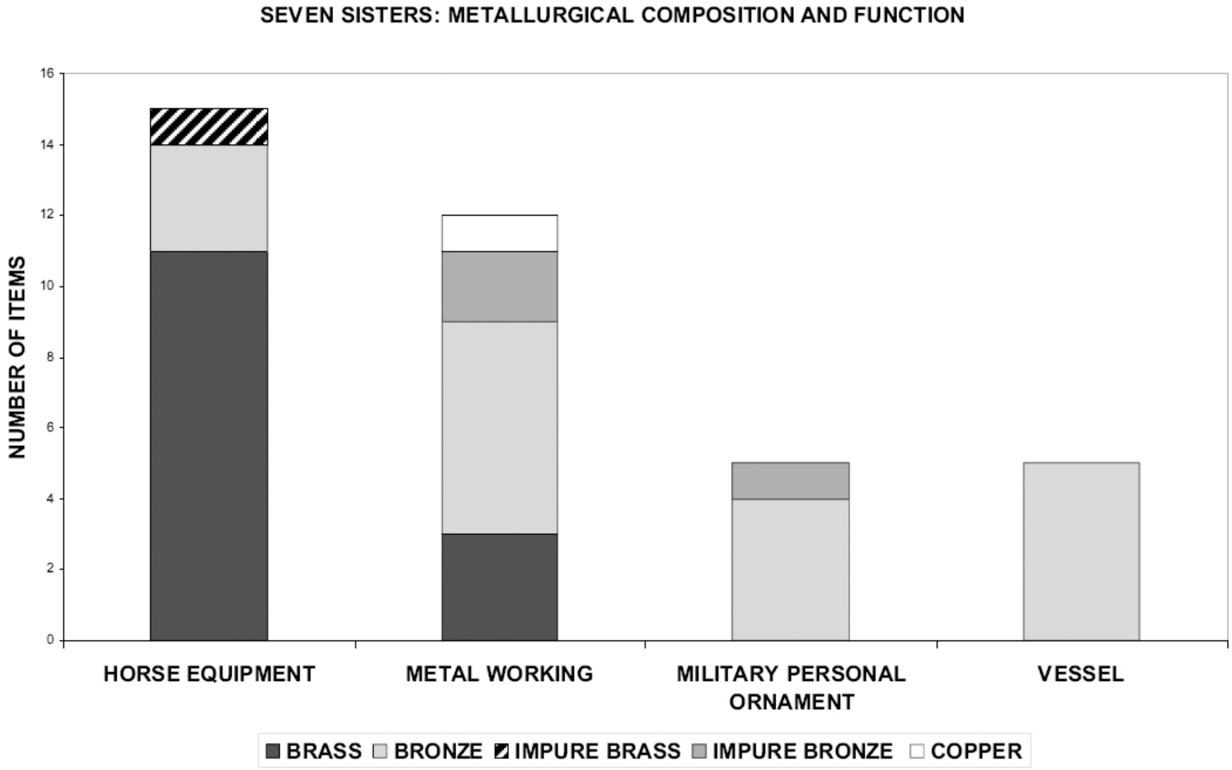


Figure 9.3. Graph showing the metallurgical composition and function of the artefacts in the Seven Sisters hoard

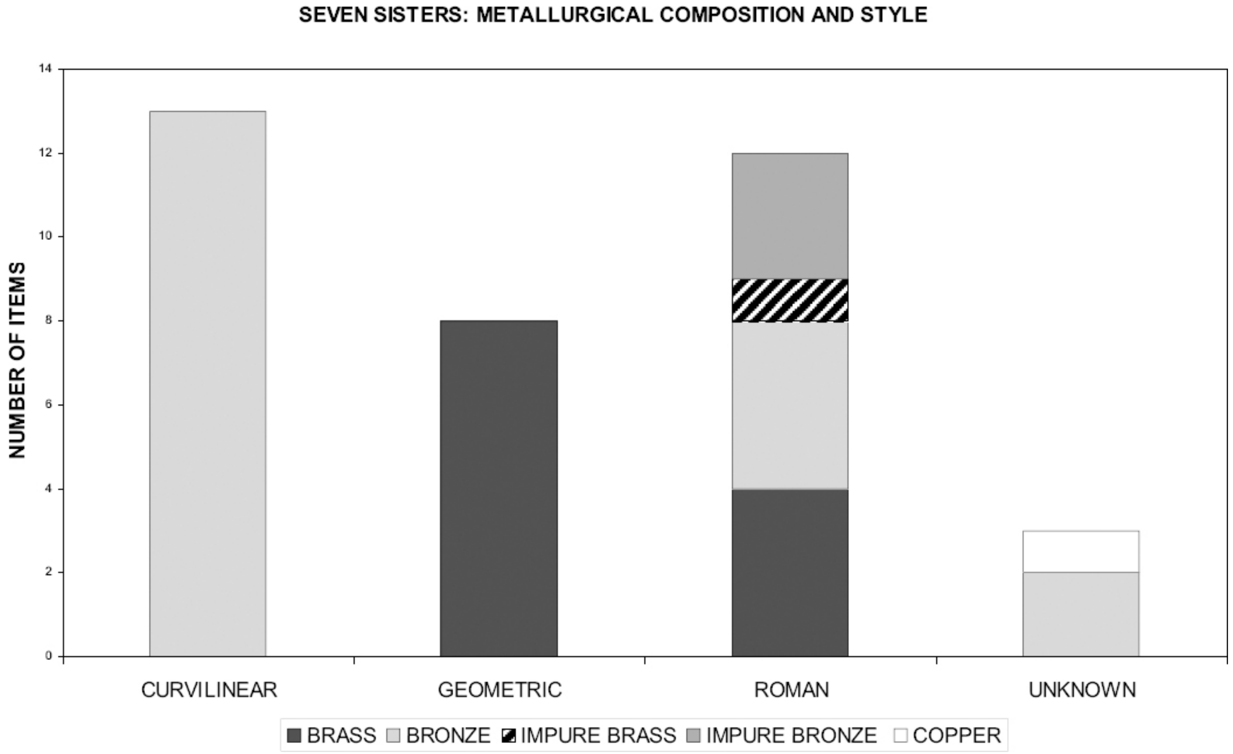


Figure 9.4. Graph showing the metallurgical composition and the style of the artefacts in the Seven Sisters hoard

Both ‘curvilinear’ La Tène and ‘geometric’ native styled objects in this hoard could be interpreted as elite, high status artefacts, made from specific and controlled metallurgical compositions. There is no mixing of materials resulting in gunmetal, and no addition of lead – despite the fact that this was an option and the materials would have been available (e.g. Mattingly 2006, 139), and could have made the technological processes of casting the metal and applying the glass/enamel easier (Bateson and Hedges 1975, 185–6; Maryon 1971, 174; Bayley and Butcher 2004, Appendix 9.1; Bateson 1981, 79–81; Northover 1999, 142–3).

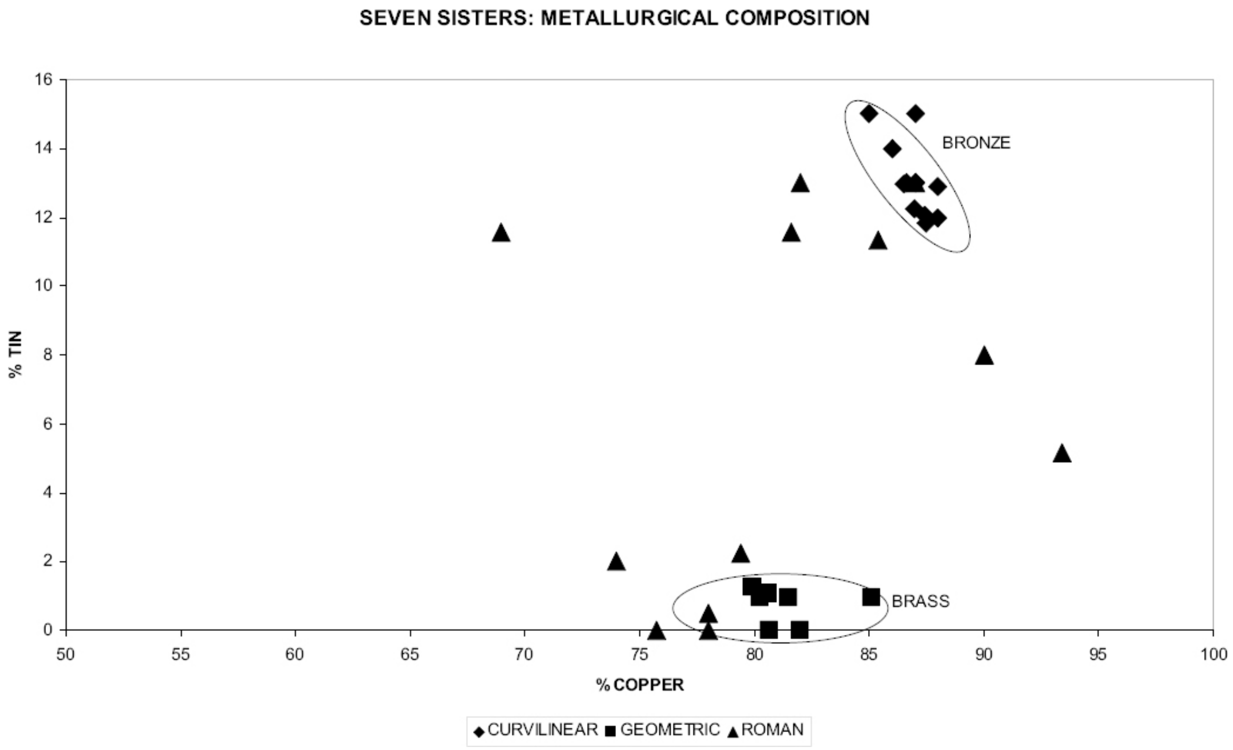


Figure 9.5. Scatter diagram showing the copper and tin content of items in the Seven Sisters hoard

The control and purity of the copper alloys used for the Iron Age/native alloys is in contrast to some of the Roman material from the hoard. Most of the recognisable military gear is, like the native material, either bronze or brass – but of a less consistent composition. However, some pieces from the hoard, as with the Roman domestic material from Camerton (Cowell 1990), as well as many contemporary brooches (Bayley and Butcher 2004), and other Roman/Romano-British artefacts (Dungworth 1996; 1997, 5), are of more mixed alloys such as impure brass, gun metal and impure bronze.

The metalworking material is also interesting; the pelta shaped brass ingots are native rather than Roman in form (see Joy this volume) and, as with other native 'geometric' objects from the hoard show a very consistent and unadulterated brass composition. Trace element analysis is inconclusive as to whether there are characteristic compositions for native as opposed to Roman brass artefacts, though native material in this hoard does show a tight compositional group (see Figures 9.5, 9.6 and 9.7).

The percentage of zinc used for these artefacts is lower than would be produced by an efficient cementation process (Bayley 1990), and implies the metal could have been melted previously (there is a decrease in the zinc content of brass of approximately ten percent with each remelting (Bayley 1990; Dungworth 1997, 8)). However, as stated above, the ‘geometric’ style objects maintain a high degree of purity in comparison with other objects made from remelted brass, such as brooches and domestic Roman items.

The native character of some of the metal working material is illustrated by the presence of a ‘Celtic’ weight in tin bronze, identified by Spratling (Wainwright and Spratling 1973). The two casting jets – the most evident pieces of ‘scrap’ in the hoard are probably Roman and show the most mixed and inconsistent composition of all the objects.

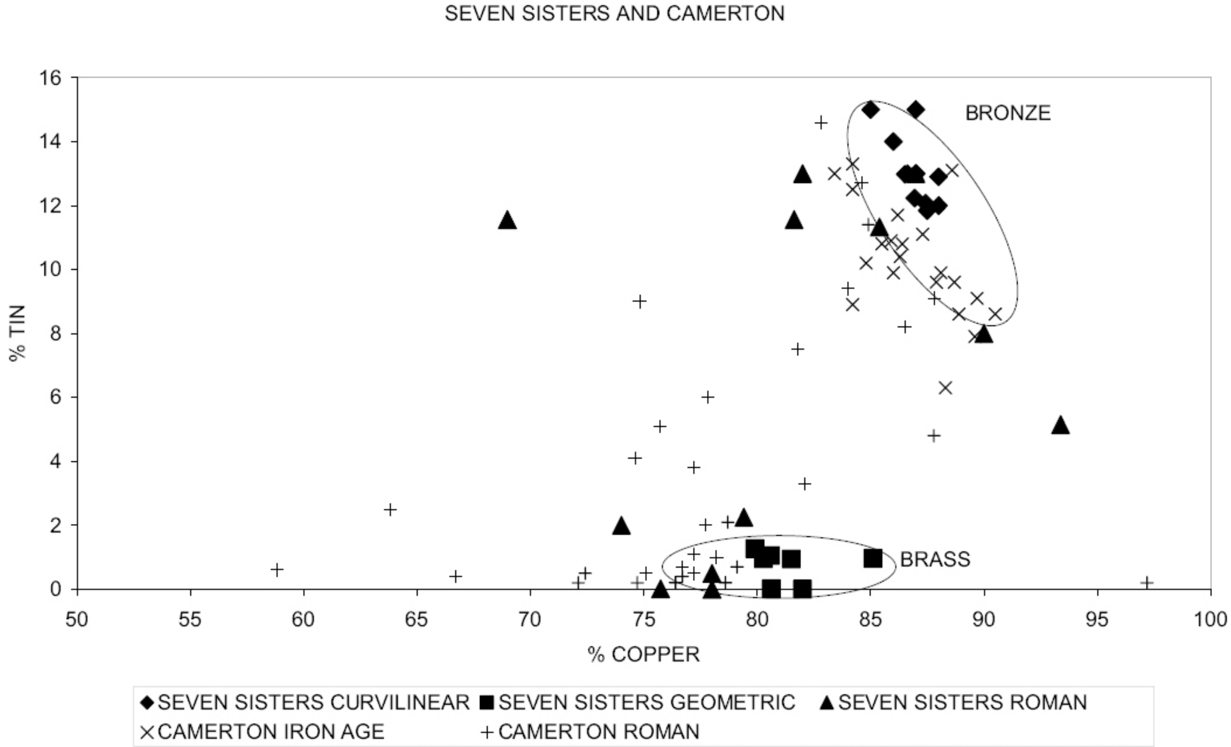


Figure 9.6. Scatter diagram showing the copper and tin content of items in the Seven Sisters hoard and the Camerton assemblage

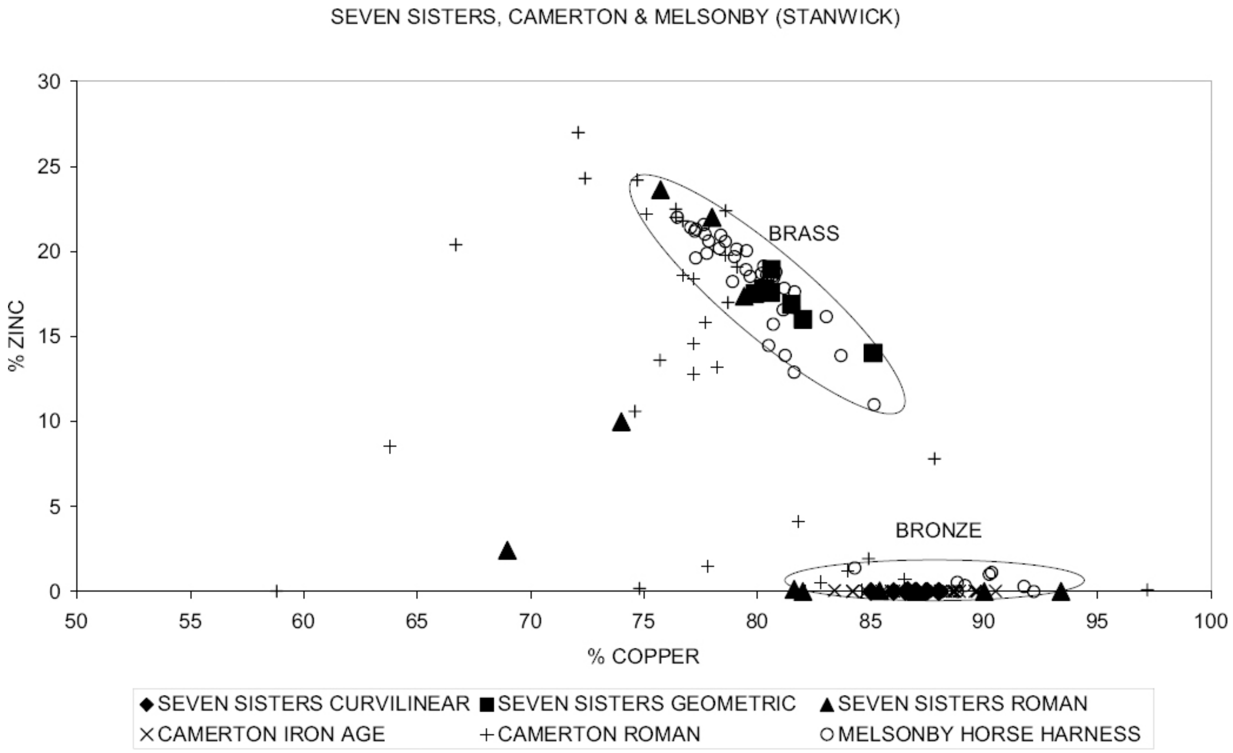


Figure 9.7. Scatter diagram showing the copper and zinc content of items in the Seven Sisters hoard, the Camerton assemblage and the Melsonby (Stanwick) hoard

Seven Sisters, Camerton and Melsonby (Stanwick)

The elemental composition of objects from the Seven Sisters hoard may be compared with existing data on the metalwork assemblage from Camerton in Somerset (Cowell 1990) and with metalwork from the Melsonby, North Yorkshire, hoard (Dungworth 1996; Fitts et al. 1999): these show both chronological and stylistic parallels with the material from Wales.

Figure 9.5 shows a graph of copper plotted against tin for the Seven Sisters hoard. This illustrates that the ‘curvilinear’ La Tène style material from Seven Sisters, forming a discrete group towards the right-hand top corner is bronze, and the ‘geometric’ style objects forming a different group, along the lower axis, are manufactured from brass. The Roman material includes both bronze and brass, but has a more heterogeneous distribution in terms of composition due to more variable concentrations of tin and zinc, and by the addition of lead.

This pattern of composition is reinforced when the Seven Sisters metal work is compared directly to artefacts from Camerton (Figure 9.6). The Camerton Iron Age material predominantly consists of horse equipment, button and loop fasteners and tankard handles (equating with the ‘curvilinear’ La Tène style material from Seven Sisters). These objects are mostly of unleaded tin bronze (top right-hand corner), whereas the Roman objects are of both bronze and brass and have a much broader scatter (Figure 9.6). Again there is a strong difference between the small range of alloys used for the native artefacts compared with the wide range used for the stylistically Roman material. Cowell (1990) has observed that in the Camerton assemblage, Roman military equipment is mostly of unleaded brass or bronze (i.e. they are of relatively controlled compositions as with the Seven Sisters material) but leaded copper alloys and gunmetal are commonly used for the manufacture of personal and domestic Romano-British items. There appears to be less close control over the manufacturing processes relating to personal or domestic items.

The Seven Sisters hoard can also be compared directly with the horse harness sets from Melsonby analysed by Dungworth (1996). Both Leeds (1933) and Macgregor (1962) observed, on stylistic grounds, four separate sets of horse harness equipment within the Melsonby hoard. These observations were later confirmed, and slightly amended by analytical work carried out by Dungworth (1997, 5; in Fitts et al. 1999). One harness set is of bronze, and three are of brass. In Figure 9.7, copper is plotted against zinc; the brass ‘geometric’ style artefacts from the Seven Sisters hoard sit directly with the three brass harness sets from Melsonby (top right-hand corner). The bronze horse harness set from Melsonby, the ‘curvilinear’ style objects from Seven Sisters hoard and the Iron Age objects from Camerton all sit along the horizontal axis. The relatively tight grouping of the native pieces is in contrast to the larger variation in the composition of the Roman copper alloys.

Although regionality of styles has been alluded to for the native ‘geometric’ objects (Macgregor 1962), there does seem to be some broader pattern in the technological style. The use of relatively pure brass as a metal, continued employment of the lost wax method of casting and the use of new alloys for the production of horse harness equipment all seems consistent between south Wales and North Yorkshire. Further analysis of material such as the hoard from Middlebie (Dumfriesshire), and the Santon and Saham Toney hoards from Norfolk would make interesting comparisons.

Decorative Techniques

Within the Seven Sisters hoard there is a wide range of decorative techniques applied to the metalwork including the addition of glass, enamel and niello to recesses, plus the use of inscribed and punched decoration directly to the metal surface.

The style of decoration, the form of application of additional materials and the colour of both supplementary decoration and the metal substrate allow for numerous possible combinations of effects; but again there are clear discernible patterns as to what is used in what context. Figure 9.8 shows, for example, that red glass is only present on native ‘curvilinear’ style material, polychrome enamel is used exclusively on ‘geometric’ style objects and tinning and niello only on Roman material.

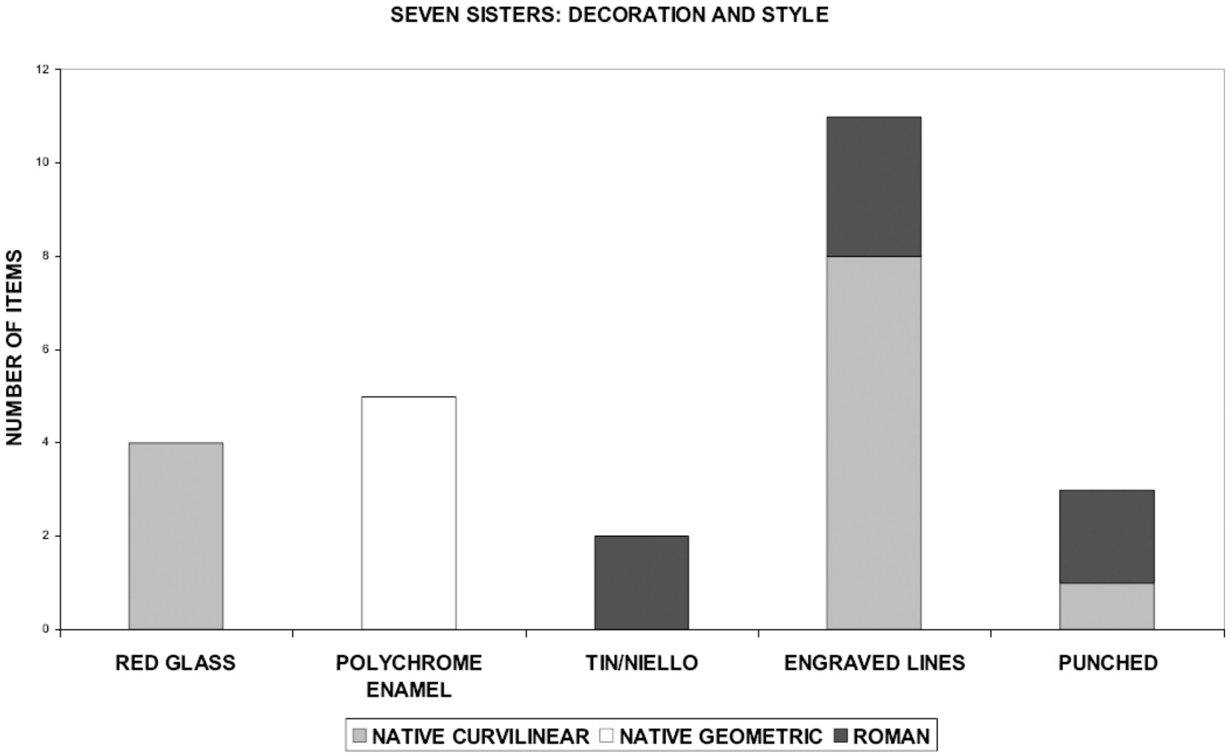


Figure 9.8. Graph showing the decoration and style of the artefacts in the Seven Sisters hoard

Heated glass inlays versus enamels

As stated above, Davies and Spratling's native style artefacts, which they refer to as either 'restrained' or 'polychromed jewelled', have been separated into two stylistically distinct groups. The 'restrained' ('curvilinear') group represents recognisably late La Tène style and has flowing curvilinear patterns; shapes and voids are filled with cross-hatching or inlaid glass to emphasise the motifs. 'This technique was used to integrate recessed areas of copper alloy with inlaid opaque red glass to form complex curvilinear patterns' (Rigby in Stead 2005, 120). The native, but technically and stylistically very distinct 'polychromed jewelled' group ('geometric'), incorporates the use of imported Roman technology, but uses recognisably Iron Age or 'Celtic' form and style.

Either 'red glass' or 'coloured enamels' are used to decorate the native style artefacts from the hoard. Although 'glass' and 'enamel' are similar materials, the two terms are used here to distinguish between the better-preserved, larger areas of red inlay, and the smaller areas of degraded polychrome decoration. The appearance of the inlays is very different and they were manufactured in technologically distinct ways. The term 'glass' is used here to denote a heat-softened inlay of red glass, and 'enamel' as an inlay applied as ground glass within the cells, which was fused in situ by heating to form a cohesive block of colour.

The Iron Age red 'sealing wax' glass, heavily identified with late La Tène material, has an intense colour and opacity due to manufacturing the glass in reducing conditions in which cuprite dendrites are formed. In Wales, so far this glass has only ever been found applied to a bronze substrate, and in this hoard it is present on the pendant hooks and two of the tankard handles ('curvilinear' style). The decoration was almost certainly applied by cutting the glass to shape and then inserting it into shallow cut or cast-in recesses (Haseloff 1991, 639; Rigby unpublished). The glass pieces could then be heat-softened so as to fit accurately to the shapes, and to help fuse them to the metal substrate; the surface was then polished. Excessive heat would be avoided; the inlays were not melted and it was important to avoid oxidising the red coloured cuprite to green copper oxide. These recesses are carefully shaped, often have curved edges and a relatively large surface area; they interplay with areas of metal to form the main element of the design.

In the 'geometric' style material, the designs used are executed in a different manner "…with (their) greater emphasis on rectilinear work which appears to have been a new development at about the time of the Claudian invasion' (Davies and Spratling 1976, 137). These objects have small, shallow cast cells of regular shape (rectangular, petal etc.) filled with varying colours of enamel. The inset decoration is surrounded by narrow metal borders; several cells together define 'geometric and complex curvilinear designs' (Rigby unpublished). The enamel was probably applied as crushed or ground glass (Henderson 1991) and then heated in situ to melt the glass and fuse it to the metal. The small cells would help reduce cracking caused by the differential expansion and contraction occurring as the object is heated and cooled (Maryon 1971, 175). The enamels are much more variable in composition than the red glass and much more degraded, which makes it harder to establish their original colours (probably a combination of red, yellow, white and blue). This is a style again seen in south east Wales in the strap union from Chepstow (Taylor and Brailsford 1985; Savory 1976) and the Boverton collar (Gwilt – see below) and which Macgregor refers to as "the Silurian predilection for enamel in rectangular cells" (Macgregor 1962, 34).

Glass compositions in the hoard

Henderson concluded that the red glass present on the pendant hooks fitted into a tradition of inlaid red glass dating to the late Iron Age in Britain (Henderson 1989a) and especially Wales (1989b).

Analysis also showed distinct compositions for the polychrome enamel inlaid into the 'geometric' style artefacts; these are relatively degraded but analysis has helped determine their originals colours.

- Red glass: high copper (average 9%), high lead glass (average 31%); coloured by copper oxide dendrites
- Red enamel: low copper (average 1.9%) high lead glass (average 28%); coloured by small discrete particles of copper and copper oxide
- Yellow enamel: high lead (average 17%); coloured by lead antimonate
- White enamel: low lead (average 0.3%); coloured by calcium antimonate.
- Blue enamel: copper (1–6%); calcium antimonate.

Figure 9.9 shows how these two forms of enamel/glass are compositionally distinct. The opaque red glass has higher copper and lead oxide content than most of the polychrome enamel and correlates closely to red glass used on many different Iron Age artefacts from England and Wales. The polychrome enamel is more diverse compositionally, but is much more comparable to Romano-British enamels than to Iron Age glass.

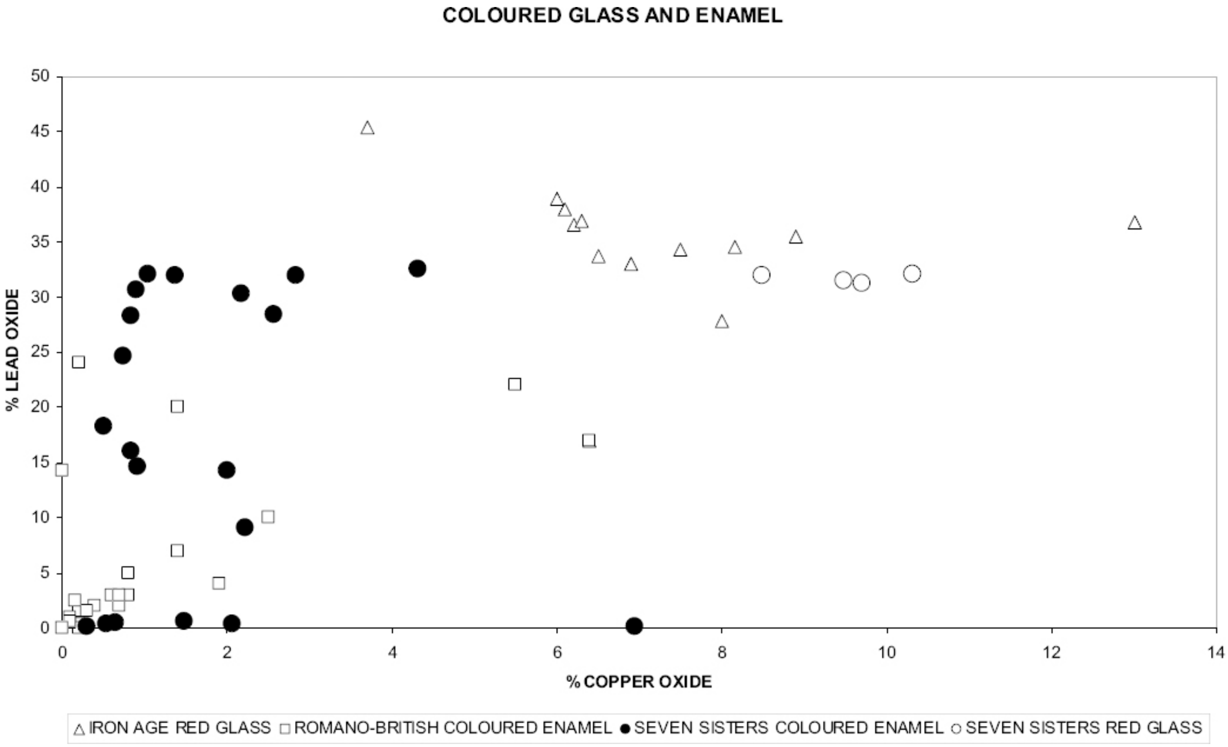


Figure 9.9. Scatter diagram showing the copper oxide and lead oxide content in the Seven Sisters glass and enamel, plus other Iron Age and Romano-British examples

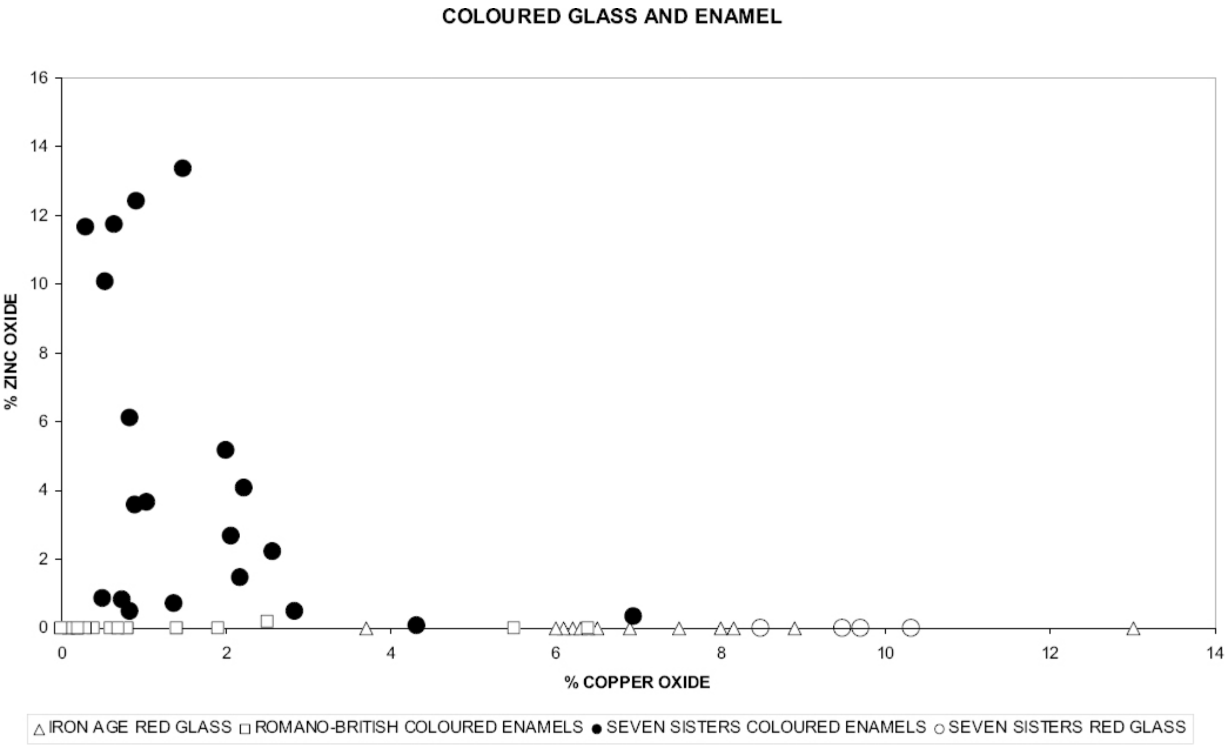


Figure 9.10. Scatter diagram showing the copper oxide and zinc oxide content in the Seven Sisters glass and enamel, plus other Iron Age and Romano-British examples

A further distinctive characteristic of the enamel used in the native ‘geometric’ artefacts from the Seven Sisters hoard, is its zinc content (Figure 9.10). Iron Age red glass and Romano-British enamels from sites such as Prestatyn (Henderson 1989b) and Dinorben, as well as those from England analysed by Bateson and Hedges (1975) show virtually no zinc content, whereas the Seven Sisters enamels show a significant zinc presence. However, Bateson and Hedges have noted idiosyncratic quantities of other elements within enamels such as tin, lead and antimony, which are present irrespective of their use as colourants, and suggest the recipes of individual craftsmen or workshops might have been used. This again is different to the red glass, which seems to have been made and traded in blocks (Hughes 1972, 99).

The addition of zinc to the enamels may be due to special properties associated with zinc ores. Their seemingly alchemical nature in transforming copper to gold-coloured brass could have influenced its addition to the enamels, where it apparently serves no practical purpose.

The contrast between these materials would seem to be technological as well as stylistic. Red glass was essentially Iron Age and polychrome enamel was originally Roman. However, in Britain polychrome enamelling seems to have been adopted and used culturally in a native/Iron Age way during the first century AD following the Claudian invasion.

Other applied decoration

The application of niello and tinning were both Roman decorative techniques, and are found only on the Roman military horse gear within the Seven Sisters hoard (Figure 9.8).

Engraved or punched decoration applied directly to the metal surface occurs on many artefacts decorated in the late (curvilinear) La Tène style, including the pendant hooks and some of the tankard handles in the Seven Sisters hoard. However both techniques are absent on the ‘geometric’ objects within the Seven Sisters hoard (although not on the closely paralleled strap union from Chepstow (Savory 1976)). The use of engraved lines was common on many objects from Britain inlaid with red glass, where the inset decoration has a line around its edge (as seen on the pendant hooks). Within this hoard there also seems to be an increasing occurrence of more ornate lines including zigzags on the pendant hooks and linear areas of hatching on the tankard handles. Punched decoration is used on some of the Seven Sisters tankard handles and on other late La Tène artefacts from south Wales. Both engraved and punched decoration are present on several of the pieces of Roman military equipment and are widely used techniques during the Early Romano-British period (see the second part of this paper for a fuller discussion of decoration and style).

Discussion: Colour and style

Both chemical analysis and stylistic interpretations suggest there are two distinct Late Iron Age traditions occurring: ‘curvilinear’ and ‘geometric’. Both styles are close chronologically and both are different to contemporary Roman material.

The first of these, the ‘curvilinear’ La Tène style, consists of artefacts made from bronze using the lost wax technique. They are often decorated with inlays of red and sometimes yellow glass. The large filled recesses or voids in the metal are integral to the ‘curvilinear’ style designs, (as with the earlier use of basket hatching to enhance the design). The high lead content of both the red and yellow glass almost certainly made it easier to soften and inlay the relatively large areas; it would be technologically far more taxing to fill these voids or recesses with ground glass heated in situ.

The largely restricted use of red and yellow coloured glass, but not blue or white, for more traditionally designed ‘curvilinear’ La Tène artefacts, seems significant to a greater extent in Wales in this period than in the much more rapidly Romanised south east of England. There is frequent use of red (and occasionally yellow) glass on horse equipment, and later on similarly ‘curvilinear’ styled artefacts such as tankard handles, mounts, bowls, and even figurines. Yellow glass seems to be acceptable in these contexts to some degree as with the Hambledon, Buckinghamshire strap-union (Haseloff 1991 642), the recent find of a massive strap union from Maendy hillfort in south Wales, and the massive armlets from north-east Scotland).

In south east England, the correlations shown between type of metal, colour of decoration and style of ornament are not so clear-cut. For example, the ‘curvilinear’ style ‘Suffolk’/Lakenheath terret (Foster 2002) has blue glass used with red enamel, as does the harness brooch from Folly Lane (Foster in Niblett 1999); this object also uses a brass substrate for a ‘curvilinear’ style artefact. Other colours of inlay were also used; for example the Westhall quadrelobed harness mounts have a pale coloured inlay (Bateson 1981, 18). It therefore appears that the coloured inlay and the metal alloy used for these artefacts from south-east England were not selected to such rigid formulae. This region of England was using a combination of native and imported Roman technology soon after the invasion (e.g. the bridle bit from Folly Lane (Foster in Niblett 1999). However, there appears to be a more chaotic and less structured approach to the use of these different styles and technologies. Perhaps this reflects the more immediate upheaval produced by rapid Romanisation compared to the lengthy campaigning and formalised cultural resistance reflected in artefact technology further north and west.

It is also possible that the relatively rigid use of colour is a reference to the past where the restricted and symbolic use of colours was practised more rigorously (e.g. symbolism equated with the martial/bloody and sometimes masculine nature of red as well as possibly its dynamic properties and magical powers (Jones and Macgregor 2002; Young 2006). This practice then retained more significance in frontier zones.

Of the four main colours of glass used in the Iron Age in Britain (red, yellow, blue and white), blue and white are those used least for inlays, and are notable for their absence on most martial and feasting gear decorated in the ‘curvilinear’ La Tène style. Blue has possible gender connotations: colour symbolism is discussed in more detail by Mel Giles in this volume, but it is interesting to note that in the Yorkshire burials blue glass beads were exclusively buried with women (Fitzpatrick 2007; Giles this volume). It is also worth noting the extensive use of white, yellow, colourless and blue glass, but hardly ever red, for the beads from Meare and Glastonbury (Henderson 1987; 1995).

There is also a technologically limiting factor for the application of different coloured inlays: both red and yellow glasses are heavily leaded, and are therefore more easily softened, cut and applied into large irregular shaped areas. Neither the blue nor white Iron Age glass would have these properties; they were more likely to be applied as coloured dots. It is not until enamelling techniques using powdered glass were introduced that these colours could be applied in more controlled ways to shaped champlevé recesses. Even then, larger cells appear to have been relatively difficult to ‘enamel’.

The importance of the colour of the metal substrate should also be considered. The ‘geometric’ style objects in the Seven Sisters hoard are made from brass, which involved a very different technique of production (i.e. the cementation process (Bayley 1990)). Brass looks quite distinct from bronze and possesses a colour and sheen only previously seen on gold metal itself. The adoption of this gold coloured metal is notable when gold artefacts (non-coins) were uncommon in the west of Britain in the Iron Age, and in particular in Wales – apart from the odd coin imported from England and the border area (for possible Iron Age gold artefacts from Wales see Gwilt 2007). It is likely that imports of gold from Ireland to Wales had ceased by the end of the Bronze Age (Northover 1995, 529), and most gold entering Britain from the continent was to the south east of Britain, becoming relatively scarce further north and west of this region (Beswick et al. 1990, 27).

The metal composition of prestigious Late Iron Age ‘curvilinear’ style artefacts from south Wales was bronze, without zinc or lead. This was closely monitored, as was the type of artefact manufactured and the type of design used; for example with decorated terrets, harness brooches, and vessels (see appendix). This implies a large degree of control of metal and metal manufacturing by an elite. The radical change in colour and design used for the ‘geometric’ style objects is striking, especially as the artefact types remain the same (horse harness equipment) and there is a similar use of a relatively pure and consistent metallurgical composition, though in this case using brass. The implication is that those commissioning/manufacturing both these styles of artefacts were innovative and well connected – and able to access both the technology and the materials needed. The near contemporary juxtaposition of these two Iron Age styles sends out two messages – one of change the other of continuity. There are several possibilities to consider for their apparent contemporaneity: are these ‘geometric’ style objects being commissioned by competing Iron Age elites, tapping into new resources and technologies and literally showing their colours? Alternatively are we viewing rapid changes in production at this time? Producers could have been responsible for accessing and using different materials, with consumers, a new elite, not minding the difference as long as the right messages regarding wealth and status were explicit. Both the old and the new styles were circulating and deposited together during the mid to late first century AD. It is likely that Late La Tène ‘curvilinear’ style material continued to be made in Wales during the first century AD, at a similar time to the ‘geometric’ style. The Seven Sisters hoard is a particularly good illustration of this: Davies and Spratling (1976) note that the pendant hooks were broken but not used, implying the contemporary manufacture of both ‘native’ styles of object.

Despite the colour of the metal, artefacts manufactured from pure brass are not used for high status (non-brooch) personal ornament in Wales, such as torcs and collars (for example Dinnington (Northover in Beswick 1990, 22), Boverton (work in progress) and Tre’r Ceiri (Savory 1971, 67)); these are brass or bronze, but the metal is not so pure. They tend to contain tin and zinc, as well as some lead, and in this respect appear more like brooches.

It is necessary to reference two tiers of personal ornament in the first century AD: first torcs and native armlets, rarely found in domestic or Romano-British military settings, and second, brooches, which represent a different and much more democratised style of personal ornament/decoration. The (relative) mass introduction of brooches in the first century BC into southeast England (Hill's fibula event horizon 1997; Haselgrove 1997) and their subsequent spread, form a separate group of artefacts which is not the subject of this paper or project. Many brooches from the first century AD were manufactured using two-piece moulds and their metal content often incorporated the use of brass; this alloy was not used in Britain before the influence of Roman trade (Bayley 1990). The proliferation of brass occurred in Augustus' reign during the controlled manufacture of brass coinage. Some of the earliest of the Romano-British brooches seem to be closely derived from La Tène III style brooches (i.e. Nauheim derivative and Colchester A brooches) and interestingly, the composition of these, like the elite metalwork from the Seven Sisters hoard is either relatively pure brass or bronze, not gunmetal, and with no added lead (Dungworth 1995). However, both the bronze and brass content within the majority of first century AD brooches appears debased compared to both coinage and Roman and native military ornament. The melting of state controlled Roman brass, with the subsequent addition of bronze and lead (Dungworth 1995) was probably happening amongst the entourage following in the wake of the Roman army. A large influx of artisans brought on an enhanced role for new forms of artefact by the sheer quantity of metal now accessible, and due to a cultural shift, accepting its availability. This allowed those from outside a very limited elite to use adornment made from material previously unavailable, and pushed in train the development of what are now perceived as Romano-British style brooches.

The elite and functional quality of decorated Late Iron Age artefacts for horses, feasting and drinking from Wales and the skill used for their manufacture and design imply these bronze and brass objects were valued for their practical attributes, over and above the importance and worth attached to the display of personal ornament or precious metals; the relative strength and usefulness of brass may have appealed more than gold – which can really only be used for ornamentation or tokens of exchange. In many societies, this is why gold is perceived as valuable (Herbert 1984) – it is purely a luxury rather than a functional material; it is also a material that is best displayed as jewellery to promote individual social standing and wealth.

So far only the Seven Sisters and Melsonby hoards containing Iron Age horse equipment have undergone detailed analysis, and both show a similar pattern in the use of either bronze or brass for certain types and styles of artefact. Some single objects such as the Folly Lane harness brooch and bridle bit (Northover in Niblett 1999, 142–3), and the Saham Toney strap union (Northover in Beswick 1990, 22) have also been examined. It is not yet possible to tell how unusual the use of pure brass is for Iron Age horse harness equipment and more analysis is needed. However, there is a discernible pattern emerging for objects discussed in this paper.

Conclusion

As highlighted, the artefacts of the 'geometric' Iron Age style in the Seven Sisters hoard involved the selective uptake of Roman materials and technologies, but incorporated them into objects, which were of recognisably native/Iron Age style and form. In this regard, they clearly contrast with the Roman military styles.

The brass used appears to be of a finely defined composition, with the craftsmen maintaining the production of a high and consistent calibre of the alloy. The zinc content closely matches what Northover (1999) suggests is the maximum quantity that can be used in a brass while still producing a good cast (average seventeen percent). The metal chosen was certainly not for ease of use in producing a cast or in attaching enamel – so could imply the maintenance of skilled and elite metalworkers. The high zinc component of the enamels, and the pelta shaped brass ingots could suggest native manufacture of the materials used; or at least the acquisition of relatively newly manufactured brass, rather than the collecting and remelting of Roman scrap. Zinc ores are reasonably abundant compared to tin ores and occur in areas of relative proximity to south Wales. For example, there are extensive deposits of smithsonite (zinc carbonate) in the Mendips in Somerset (British Geological Survey 1998), an area already exploited for lead soon after the Roman invasion (Mattingly 2006, 139); many zinc ore sources also exist further west and north within Wales itself (Bevins 1994). Once the cementation technique of production had been mastered, materials needed for the manufacture of brass were probably easier to obtain than those needed for bronze.

Late La Tène ‘curvilinear’ style material from Wales continues to be made during the first century AD at a similar time to the ‘geometric’ style. In Wales, the Snowdon bowl, the Seven Sisters pendant hooks and the Pentyrch terret are all first century objects with ‘curvilinear’ La Tène designs: all these are made from bronze with heat-softened red glass inlays, rather than enamelling sensu stricto.

It is hoped further analysis can be undertaken, especially of enamelled artefacts from areas in conflict with Rome, for example Norfolk and south Wales, and other artefacts from the south west and north of Britain. It would be interesting to see whether style, technology and geographical locations correlate, and to assess the significance of colour in the Late Iron Age.

This paper has shown the potential of using material analysis applied to technological and stylistic studies. Some trends are becoming apparent for native decorated metalwork in the first century AD, not just within the Seven Sisters hoard and south Wales, but possibly also in other regions during this period of resistance to, and assimilation with, Rome.

The Chronological and stylistic context of the Seven Sisters Hoard (Adam Gwilt)

Chronological Context

Since its original publication, the Seven Sisters hoard has figured prominently within the wider Celtic Art literature for Britain (e.g. Wheeler 1925, 209–10 and Fig. 84; Leeds 1933, 101–5 and Pl. 2; Fox 1958, 127–9; Alcock 1963, 28–9; Megaw 1970, 173, Cat. 301; Spratling 1972; Savory 1976, 43 and 62–3, Cat. 34; Macgregor 1976, 25–6 and 178–9; Jope 2000, 155 and Pls. 230, 276–7, 295). It has also contributed significantly to specific artefact studies of tankards (Corcoran 1952) and horse equipment (Spratling 1972; Palk 1988). The significance of Roman cavalry pieces, directly associated with metalwork exhibiting native Iron Age style has ensured its continuing place within narratives of the invasion and campaigning of the Roman army in Wales (e.g. Dudley and Webster 1965, 194; Webster 1981, 135; 1984, 282; Davies 2000, 11–12; Chapman 2005, 188; Howell 2006, 59–62).

Here, it is necessary to restate and re-affirm the view that the Seven Sisters hoard was deposited during the third quarter of the first century

AD, as Davies and Spratling rightly asserted (1976, 139). In other words, it is pre-Flavian or, at latest, very early Flavian in date. In this regard, it is contemporary with the decades of campaigning of the Roman army on this western frontier and situated within a context of military clash and immediate native responses. As the precise dating of the Seven Sisters hoard continues to have wider significance for the appearance and currency of metalwork styles and decorative techniques, in Wales and across Britain, a review of the basis for dating the hoard is merited, especially in the light of the last three decades of research and new discoveries.

The most persuasive dating evidence within the hoard remains the Roman cavalry equipment (Appendix 9.1; Davies and Spratling 1976, 124–5, Cats. 1–5). The junction loop and ring (Appendix 9.1, 04.130) has a Type 4f junction loop and a cast ring of a type and form, largely of pre-Flavian use (Bishop 1988, 100 and 134, Table 4; Bishop and Coulston 2006, 120–1; Chapman 2005, 134, Cat. Td01, *and for parallels see* Bishop 1988, 160, Table 7). A similar junction ring was found in the chiefly cremation burial at Folly Lane, Verulamium, dated to around AD 50–55 (Rigby 1999, 182–92; Foster 1999a, 143–5, Cat. 8 and fig. 55; 1999b, 175–6). The strap union or junction ring (Appendix 9.1, 04.135) remains unparalleled (Bishop 1988, 134, Table 4), but has a junction loop of Type 3e attached (Bishop 1988, 160, Table 7; Chapman 2005, 133, Cat. Tc01, *and for parallels see* Bishop 1988, 159–60, Table 7; Webster 1993, 207–8, Cats. 19–21). Two of three ‘double spectacle’ examples from the Orchard Site, Abergavenny are securely dated to the first construction phase of the Roman fort in AD 55–60 (Webster 1993, 207–8). Moreover this triangular strap union from Seven Sisters would seem to be of transitional form between earlier junction rings and phalerae, therefore confidently pre-Flavian.

The phalera in this hoard is of Type 1g and could be Claudio-Neronian in date (Appendix 9.1, 04.143; Bishop 1988, 140, Table 5; Chapman 2005, 133, Cat. Tc02; Bishop and Coulston 2006, 121) This example finds close parallels with examples in the Fremington Hagg hoard (Bishop 1988, 140, Table 5; Webster 1971, 109 and Cats 3,16 and 17). This has been dated as pre-Flavian (Webster 1971, 108), or early Flavian at latest (Bishop 1988, 178, note 87). A similar example of Type 1e has been discovered in a pre-Flavian context at Usk (Webster 1995a, 38–9, Cat. 2). The ‘trifid’ pendant is of Type 1n, and may date from the Claudian period onwards (Appendix 9.1, 04.134; Bishop 1988, 96 *and for parallels see* Davies and Spratling 1976, 125; Bishop 1988, 146, Table 6; Chapman 2005, 150, Cat. Wb01; Unz and Deschler Erb 1997, 40, Cat. Nos. 1393–6). The female strap-slide (Appendix 9.1, 04.133) is not included in Bishop's corpus, though a possible female and double 'spectacled' parallel is found in a pre-Flavian context at Usk (Chapman 2005; 136, Cat. Te03; Webster 1995a, 39–40, Cat. 6).

To summarise, all five Roman cavalry pieces could date to as early as the Claudian period and both the junction loop and ring (04.130), and strap union (04.135), are probably pre-Flavian. Moreover, the range of parallels cited from other, mainly southern British and Continental Roman military contexts, is consistent with a Claudio-Neronian and possibly early Flavian currency. On this evidence, a date of deposition before AD 75 seems likely.

The decorated turned circular object and buckle within the hoard (Appendix 9.1, 04.148 and 04.123; Davies and Spratling 1976, Cats. 6 and 10) would also not be out of place within Claudio-Neronian contexts. The former is paralleled by a similar curved fitment in the Folly Lane, Verulamium chiefly burial, securely dated to AD 50–55, which has been interpreted as a cart pole end (Foster 1999a, 148–50, Cat. 12). Here, it is also associated with a nave band, sharing similar Romanised ivy leaf motifs, as on the Seven Sisters piece (Foster 1999a, 146–8, Cat. 11 and Fig. 57). This cart or chariot presence is also paralleled with the axle mount found in the Melsonby (Stanwick) hoard, dated to AD 43–70 (Macgregor 1962, 36 and 52, Cat. 136; Fitts et al. 1999, 48). The two horse bells in the Seven Sisters hoard are of a form that span the first and early second centuries AD and are often found on Roman military sites (e.g. Webster 1995b, 55; Lloyd–Morgan 1997, 270). However, pre-Flavian examples are known, for example at Fishbourne and Usk (Cunliffe 1971, 112–3, Cat. 107; Webster 1995b, 55–8). In south Wales, a similar example has recently been found near Sennybridge, in association with a Late Iron Age toggle decorated with curvilinear La Tène decoration in-filled with red glass (Gwilt in press a).

Dating evidence for the curvilinear and geometric La Tène or native style horse pieces (the bridle bits, terrets and strap unions), in this hoard currently relies upon detailed stylistic arguments and parallel hoard associations. All agree a general first century AD currency for Group II ‘Derivative-three link’ bits, Type 2 strap unions and knobbed terrets, continuing into the early second century AD in northern Britain (e.g. Leeds 1933, 113–26; Spratling 1972, 35–7, 94–7; Macgregor 1976, 25–30; Taylor and Brailsford 1985). For early associations, the Saham Toney (Ovington), Melsonby and Polden Hills hoards are particularly relevant. These have generally been dated to between the middle and the end of the third quarter of the first century AD, though there are conflicting views and emphases within this. The Boudican revolt of AD 60/61 has divided some, with regard the dating of the Saham Toney hoard (e.g. Macgregor 1976, 26; Hutcheson 2004, 33–4), however it was probably deposited between AD 50–75 (e.g. Spratling 1972, 311–2). The Melsonby and Polden Hills hoards are both dated to AD 43–70 (Macgregor 1962, 36; 1976, 26; Spratling 1972, 309; Brailsford 1975, 234; Fitts et al. 1999, 48). The Middlebie hoard is also relevant stylistically, though in this instance a less precise dating to the later first to early second century AD is posited (Macgregor 1976, 28; Hunter pers comm).

Key for this paper, is the earliest appearance of polychrome enamels on geometric La Tène or native style metalwork. Its use within the Saham Toney and Fremington Hagg hoards is relevant, each deposited between AD 50–75 *(see above)*. Most researchers have tended to see these developments as essentially post-Invasion (i.e. after AD 43), but they are difficult to place with any degree of precision. An important recent marker is the complete brass bridle bit, with geometric and polychrome glass and enamel decoration, found within the chiefly burial at Folly Lane Verulamium (Foster 1999a, 134–7, Cat. 1; Northover 1999, 136–7 *and see above for dating)*. In south Wales, a substantial strap hook recalling the form of a dress fastener (Gillam 1958, 79–85; Wild 1970, 137–55), with La Tène motifs and double bosses and decorated with enamelled rosettes, has been found within the Roman fort at Abergavenny and dated to AD 50–75 (Savory 1993, 211–4). In form, it closely matches the similarly dated strap terminals in the Melsonby hoard (Magregor 1962, 38–43, Cats. 23–36; Savory 1993, 211). The geometric rosette finds good parallel with the Seven Sisters terrets and bridle bit. This piece was found within a levelling layer associated with the construction of the pre-Flavian fort, which is dated to AD 55–60. However, slightly later intrusive material also seems to have been added to this layer (Blockley 1993, 171 and 178).

Nevertheless, when taken together, these examples currently provide reasonable evidence for the manufacture of the geometric style and polychrome enamels between AD 50–60. This early date has bearing on the, possibly broadly synchronous, development of the ‘Boss Style’ in northern Britain, whose currency has generally been seen as slightly later and spanning the later first and early second centuries AD (Leeds 1933, 110–2; Macgregor 1976, 29 and 100; Savory 1993, 213–4; Hunter pers comm).

Four of the tankard handles within the hoard have a degree of stylistic coherence (Jackson 1990, 44–5), finding closest parallel with the Hod Hill, Waddon Hill (Stoke Abbot) and Camerton tankard handles (Brailsford 1962, 15, Cats. I5 and 6 and Fig. 14; Corcoran 1952, 99–100, Cats. 12–14 and Pl. X; Jackson 1990, 44–5, Cats. 119–20 and Pl. 12). These have been dated between the late 1st century BC and the mid 1st century AD, while both Hod Hill and Camerton, as sites, date to the early to mid decades of the first century AD, with activity ceasing here at around AD 50 and AD 60 respectively (Jackson 1990, 18–25; Richmond 1968, 117–23). The recent discovery of a tankard at Biddlesden, Buckinghamshire, with three surviving copper alloy bands and a handle is another close parallel stylistically. It is securely associated with Claudio-Neronian pottery (Jody Joy *pers comm)*, providing important supporting evidence for a pre-Flavian date for the Seven Sisters tankard handles.

One of the Seven Sisters tankard handles, with vertical zig-zag lines scorped up each groove (Appendix 9.1: 04.142), finds close stylistic parallel with an example from Newstead fort (Curle 1911, Pl. 54.7; Corcoran 1952, 101, Cat. 25 and Pl. IX.3; Davies and Spratling 1976, 133; Macgregor 1976, Cat. 290) and seems a reasonable candidate for being the latest manufactured piece within the hoard. The Newstead parallel is from an early site context, probably dating to the first phase of fort building during the 80s AD, immediately after the first Agricolan campaign. In addition, the Seven Sisters terret with scalloped flange and attachment loop (Appendix 9.1: 04.129;) also appears to be a Roman form and there are flanged and looped examples from Corbridge, Newstead, Poltross Burn and Melandra Castle (Curle 1911, Pl. 75.12; Forster and Knowles 1911, Pl. 4.2; Spratling 1972, 420, Cat. 98; Macgregor 1976, Cat. 99) from seemingly late 1st and early 2nd AD contexts. Nevertheless, it is suggested that the Seven Sisters tankard handle and terret date the early currency of these forms, while the northern British examples fix the later currency of long-lived types. In other words, it is not necessary, nor convincing, to force a post-AD 75 dating of the Seven Sisters hoard, on the basis of these two less chronologically diagnostic forms.

To see Seven Sisters as dated to AD 50–75 is to situate it within the 30 years, or two generations of campaigning and guerrilla warfare between the Roman Army and the largely resistant tribes in Wales between AD 47–78 (Jackson 1951; Webster 1981; Davies 2000, 3–24; Manning 2002; 2004; Howell 2006, 65–74). This context arguably created the conditions for martial identities to flourish and for rapid technological innovations to occur. While it is dangerous to seek to match the dating of metalwork to specific historical events, such as the Boudican revolt or Caratacus's last stand, nevertheless the *broad and attested* intensity of campaigning, marching camps and fort construction by the Roman army in Wales at this time (e.g. Nash-Williams 1969; Manning 1981, 40–4 and Fig. 9; 2002; Jones and Mattingly 1990, 64–140; Davies 2000, Figs. 1.1 A and B and 2.2C; Jarrett 2002, Figs. 3.5 and 3.6) is likely to have created contexts in which the use and burial of decorated metalwork was magnified. In other words, we may be observing a general 'tide-mark' of visible metalwork use and deposition at this time (Macgregor 1976, 178). Items of La Tène or native inspiration are certainly found in well dated early fort assemblages of pre-Flavian and early Flavian date here (Manning, Price and Webster 1995; Savory 1993; Gwilt 2007) and these can reasonably be seen as part of a wider general phenomenon of deposition.

Seven Sisters and emerging La Tène stylistic trends of the first century AD (AD 40–100)

In this section, the appearance or heightened frequency of four stylistic traits, apparent in the decorated metalwork corpus for south Wales, are outlined. On current evidence, these are developments of the middle to later first century AD; that is the Campaigning period and for a generation or two afterward. These are related to the wider British corpus, the suggestion being that these were aspects of wider stylistic changes and trajectories, relating to a range of artefact classes and across Britain. The matter of whether these should properly be termed Stage VI art, or whether this term is discarded in favour of cultural-ethnic or purely descriptive names is later considered. However, chronological progression does seem apparent from the earlier ‘mirror-style’ (Stead’s Stage V) to these emerging and stylistically distinctive traits, albeit with overlap. This seems apparent, despite the current serious doubts over the chronology and chronological progression of Stage IV to Stage V art (e.g. Macdonald 2007).

Borders, boundaries and new incised decorative techniques

Two of the tankard handles in the Seven Sisters hoard (Figure 9.11a, 9.11b) illustrate the use of new decorative techniques: ring-punch work and incised cabling (Appendix 9.1: 04.138; 04.140). Similar ring-stamping is viewed on the bronze rim of the Brecon mirror (Figure 9.12), the Pentyrch large enamelled terret (Savory 1966a, fig. 1; Spratling 1972, Cat. 84) and the Chepstow strap-union (Nash-Williams 1932; Savory 1976, Cat 28, Pl. V; Jope 2000, Pl. 295f). Dot-punch work is also present on two terrets in the Polden Hills hoard (Brailsford 1975, 224, Pls. XVIIh and XIX f; Spratling 1972, Cats. 45–6) and one of the Hod Hill tankards (Corcoran 1952, 99, Cat. 13 and Pl. X.5). The use of ring stamping and dot punching is also prominent on the swords from Bardney, Lincolnshire and Congham in Norfolk, both regarded as having late Stage VI decoration (Stead 2006, 16 table 3 and Cats. 102–3).

That very similar ring stamping occurs on the Roman disc phalera in the Seven Sisters hoard (Appendix 9.1; 04.143), and other early Roman military pieces, suggests the possible adoption of a Roman technique on Iron Age or native pieces. A possible corollary of this is that the Pentyrch terret on stylistic grounds, could now plausibly sit in the third quarter of the first century AD, rather than in the first half, as Savory asserted (1966a, 44). We might also view pointil work, as on the Pentyrch terret and the newly discovered bracelet pair from Boverton (Gwilt in press b), and on for example, horse-equipment in the Melsonby and Polden Hills hoards, as another similar technique in the ascendancy.

Incised line and cable decoration is used on the handle of the Brecon mirror (Figure 9.13a and 9.13b). This was buried with a cremation and associated with a Roman lamp (singly dated to between AD 50–100), two ‘mini-terrets’, a toilet set and a wheel-made carinated bowl and lid. This burial group was discovered during the 1990s by a metal-detectorist, beside the Roman road about a quarter of a mile from the Roman fort at Y Gaer, Brecon. It was subsequently acquired by Amgueddfa Cymru –

National Museum Wales (Accession Number 97.9H). Nothing else is known about the precise burial context, though an early extra-mural cemetery is a possibility. The ceramic vessel is of Flavian form and has been used to date the burial from AD 70–100 (Sealey 2006, 16–17). Given the early Flavian establishment of the nearby fort (Wheeler 1926; Jones and Mattingly 1990, Map 4:32; Manning 2004, fig 5.2), a date of AD 75–90 for the burial seems plausible (a radiocarbon date is currently awaited from the cremated bone associated with this grave group). However, equally likely is that the mirror, a distinctive personal and high-status item, remained in circulation for a generation or two before burial. Therefore, it could feasibly have been made around AD 50–75. A very similar mirror handle is known from Ballybogey Bog, Ballymoney in County Antrim (Jope 1954; Raftery 1984, 208–10, fig. 104.1 and Pl. 66).

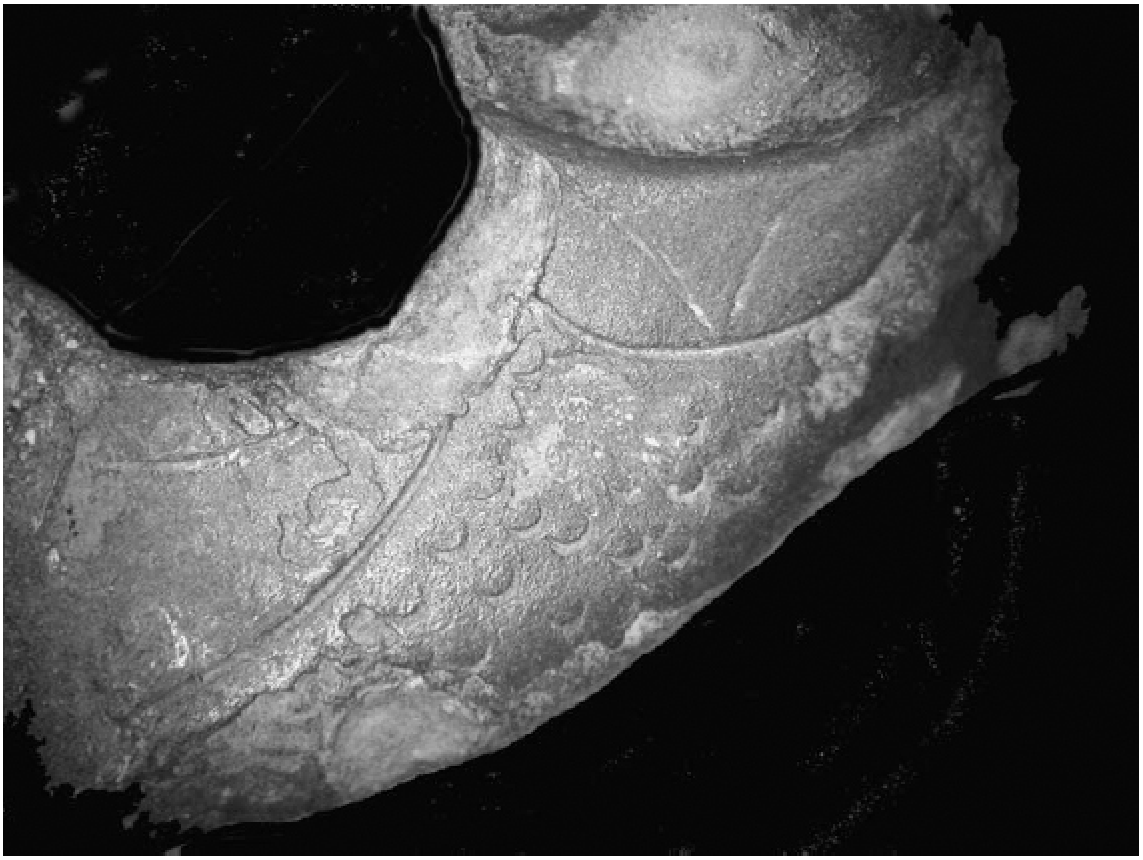


Figure 9.11a. Detail of punched decoration on tankard handle 04.140 in the Seven Sisters hoard, Neath-Port Talbot

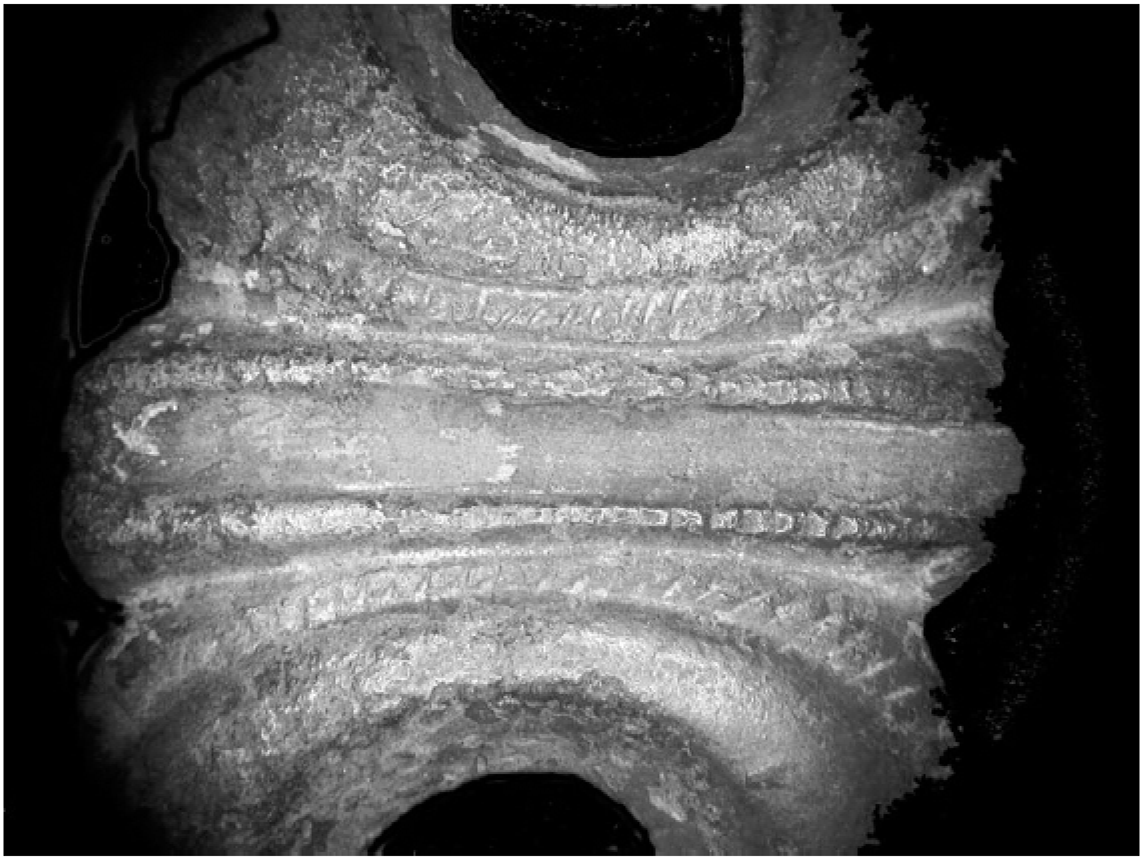


Figure 9.11b. Detail of incised cabling on tankard handle 04.138 in the Seven Sisters hoard

Looking at these mirrors and the Seven Sisters tankard handles, there seems to be an increasing pre-occupation with the definition and elaboration of borders, zones and boundaries, and a new emphasis on symmetry. This is a departure from the freer earlier curvilinear tradition. A similar effect is also apparent on the handle of the Snowdon bowl (Savory 1976, Cat 32, fig. 78; Jope 2000, Pl. 295a–d). The central knobs and cabling on these mirror handles also recall the beaded torcs and collars of the later first century AD (e.g. Megaw 1971; Macgregor 1976, Cats. 199–208; Beswick et al. 1990; Jope 2000, Pls. 258–61), while the moulding, lips and 'beaks' are also commonly found on brooches, escutcheons and horse equipment, generally dated to the mid to later first century AD. Similar boundary definition is also apparent on the sword hilts of the late swords from Caerleon, Newport and Warton, Lancashire (Boon 1974; Stead 2006, Cats. 208 and 239). The legionary fortress burial association of the former and the use of brass in the latter (Dungworth

1996, 421) are consistent with their date at, or slightly after, the mid 1st century AD (Jope 2000, 128–9).

Geometric design

A synchronous development is the appearance of geometric designs on metalwork of native style and form. These are often inset cells to take polychrome enamels creating the jewelled effect discussed by Leeds (1933, 103–5). However they also appear as incised designs and borders. Prominent examples of the former are the bridle bits, strap unions and terrets in the Seven Sisters hoard, with their square, rectangular and petalled rosette enamelled designs (Figure 9.14a; Appendix 9.1: 04.125–8, 04.131). These are decorated with red, blue and white enamels of Roman technology. The Chepstow strap union complements this with its triangular red and yellow enamelled cells, forming zig-zags confined within rectangular zones on each side plate (Savory 1976, Cat. 28, Pl. V; Taylor and Brailsford 1985, Cat. 26; Jope 2000, Pl. 295f).

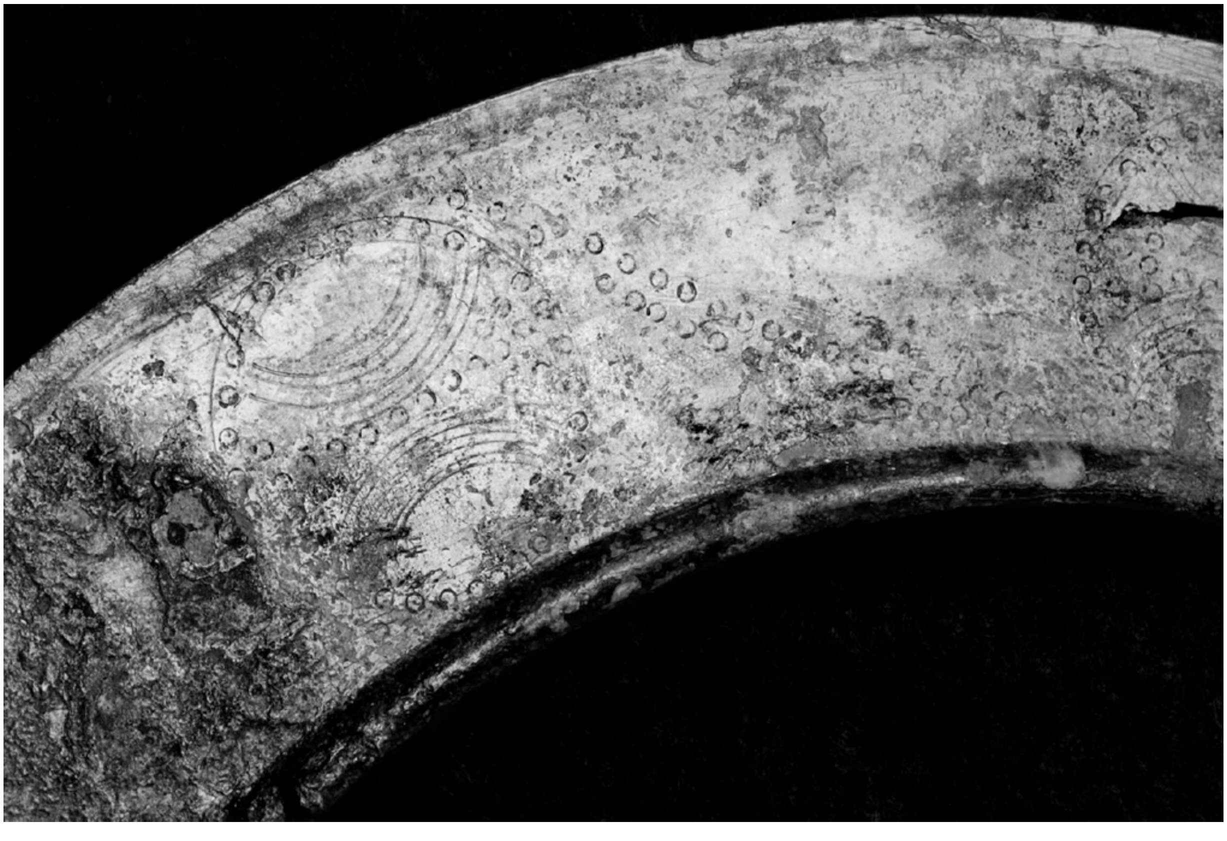


Figure 9.12. Detail of punched decoration on the outer rim of the Brecon mirror, Powys

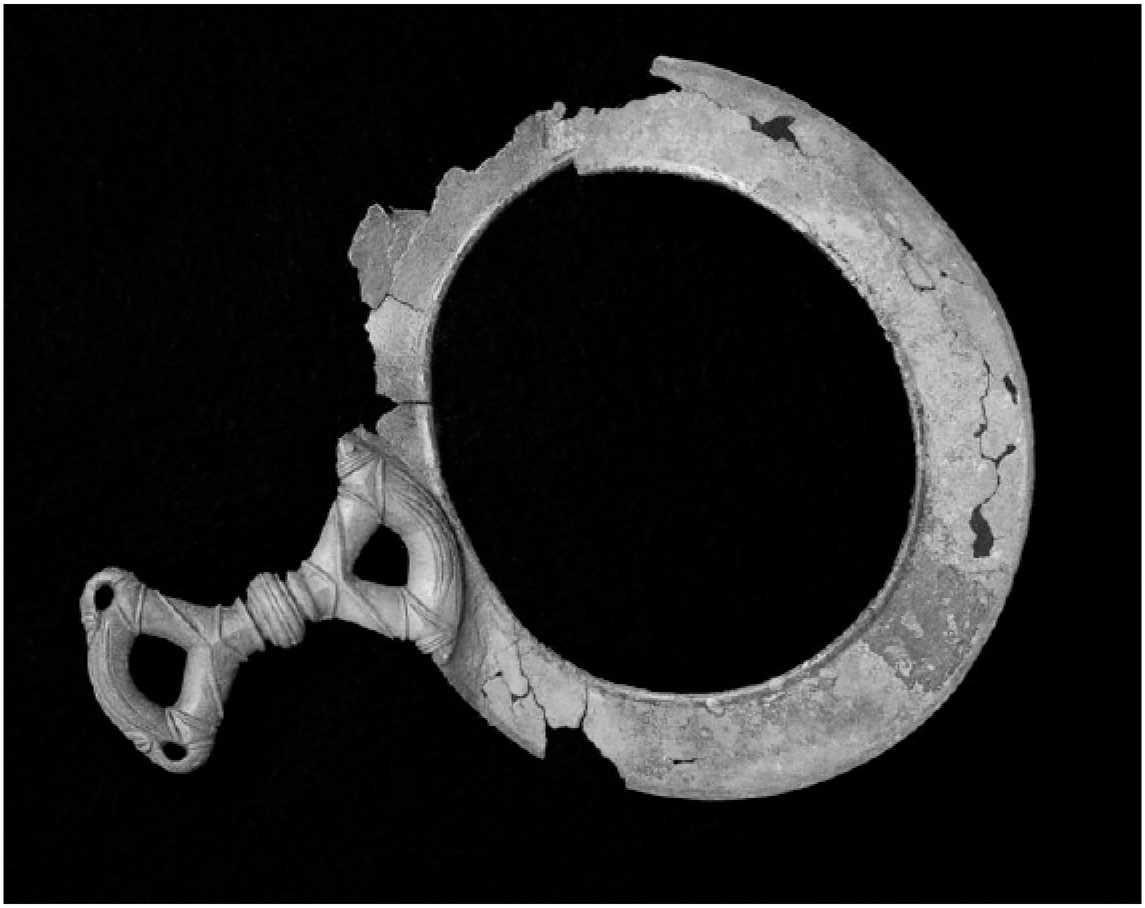


Figure 9.13a The mirror within the Brecon grave group

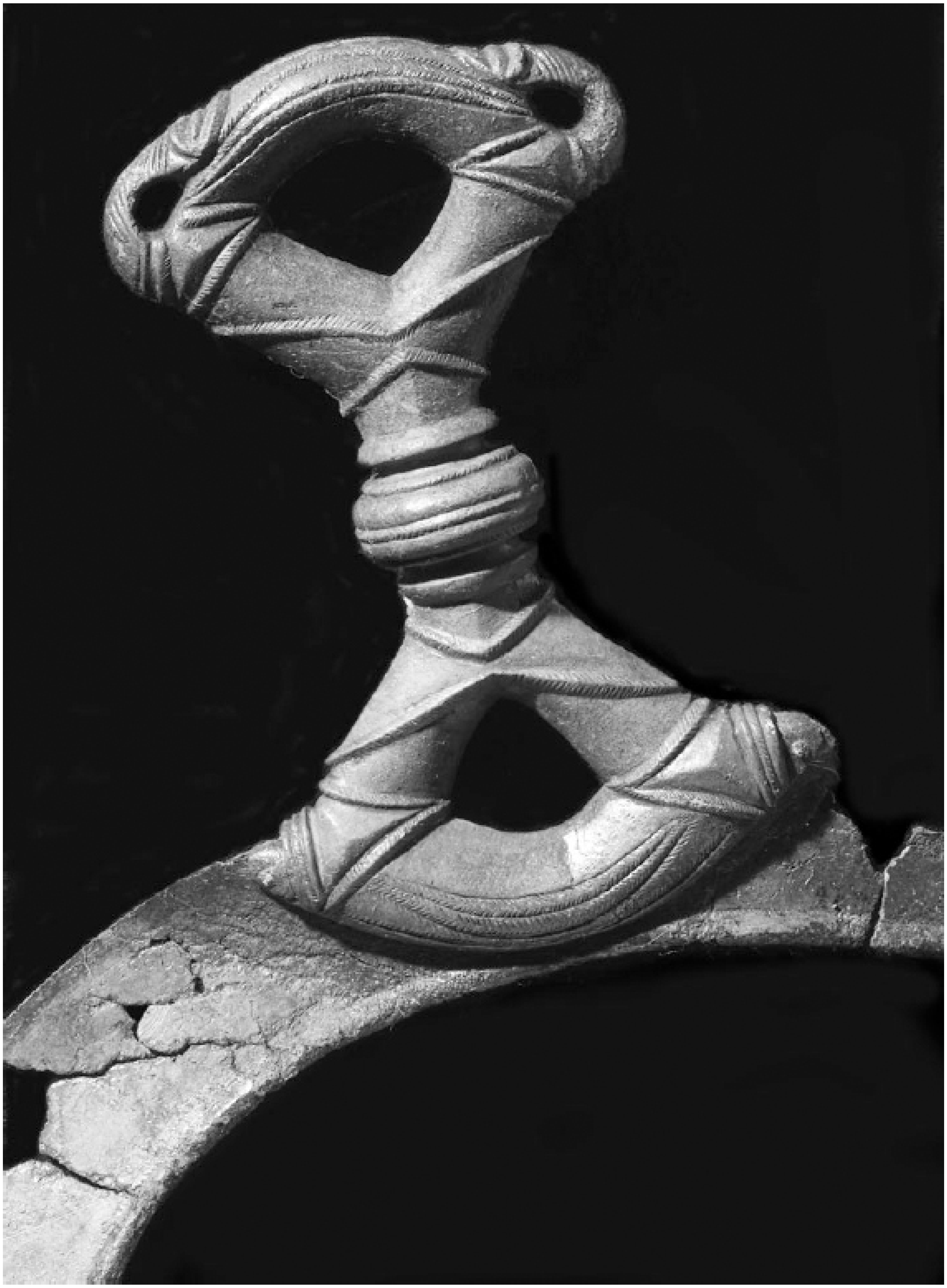


Figure 9.13b Handle of the Brecon mirror

That this trend was not restricted here to horse equipment is now convincingly illustrated by the recent discovery of a decorated bronze collar with a burial at Boverton in the Vale of Glamorgan (Figures 9.14a, 9.14b and 9.14c). Along each collar side are sixteen rectangular cells. On the front, a narrow rectangular border hiding a slot terminal is decorated with small circular recesses, into which polychrome enamels were set. Four flat and highly polished plates were also riveted to the front and back surfaces of the piece. Overall, the impression gained is that the maker was experimenting with new technologies and surface decorative effects.

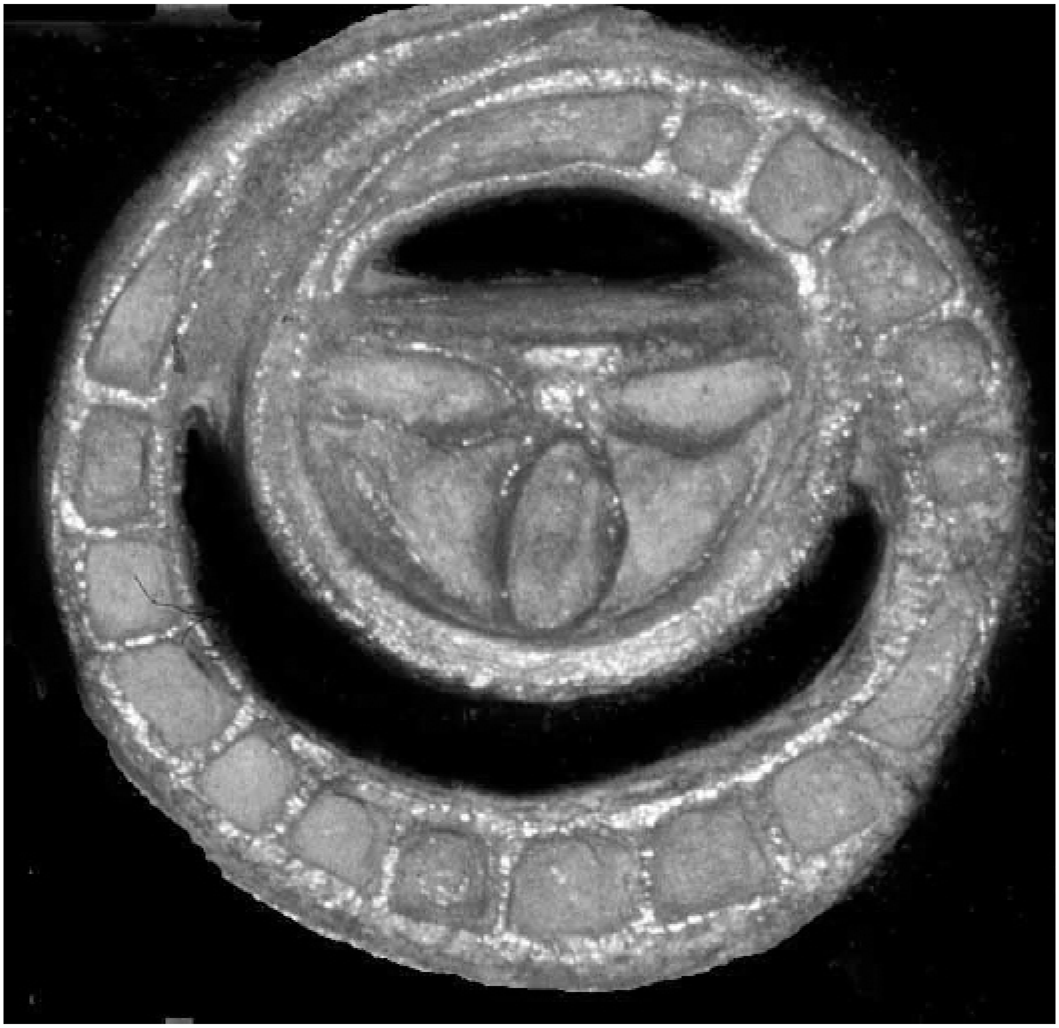


Figure 9.14a Detail of bridle bit 04.126 in the Seven Sisters hoard, showing the enamelled geometric and petal cells

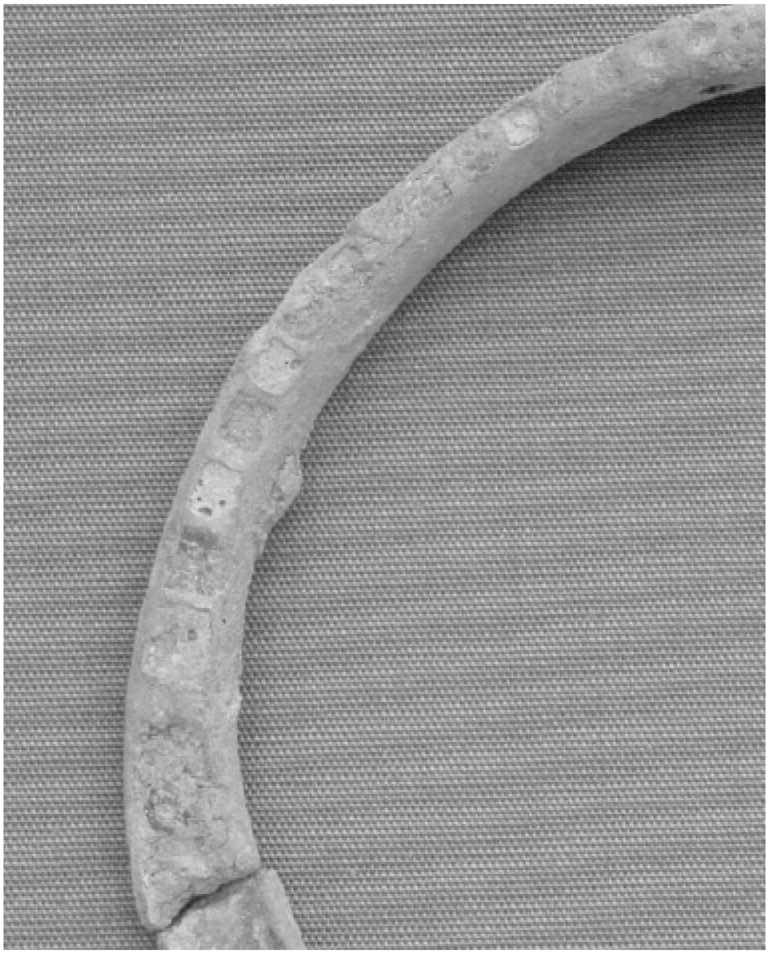


Figure 9.14b Detail of the Boverton, Vale of Glamorgan neck collar, showing the enamelled geometric cells

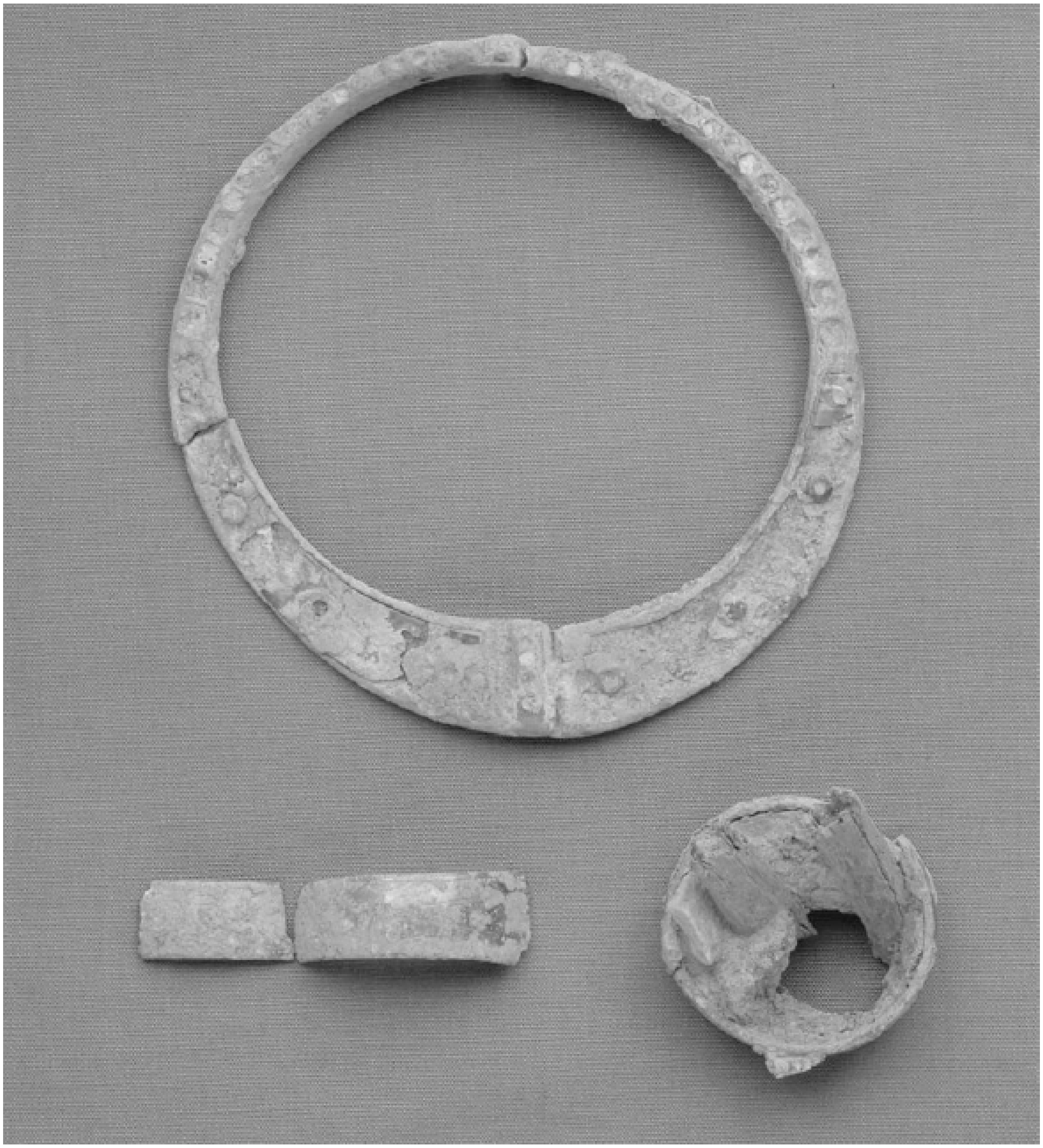


Figure 9.14c The neck collar and bracelet pair from the Boverton grave group

The collar is a distinctive south Wales variant of the wider class of neck collars of western and northern Britain. These have been dated, largely on stylistic grounds, to between the mid 1st and early 2nd centuries AD (Megaw 1971, 153; Macgregor 1976, 99–101; Beswick et al. 1990, 29; Jope 2000, 292). Given the 1st century AD form of the bracelet pair associated with this burial (Crummy 1983, 37–8, Fig. 40; Stead 1986, 125 and Fig. 52.163–6; Johns 1996, 338 and Fig. 107.15) and the close stylistic parallels between this collar and the Seven Sisters pieces, a date of AD 50–75 is provisionally argued for this collar. (A radiocarbon date is currently awaited on the associated human bone in this disturbed burial, providing the opportunity to assess this assertion and wider dating assumptions for neck-collars in Britain). Similar polychrome enamelling technique is witnessed upon the decorated collar from Dorset (Megaw 1971, 147, Fig. 2; Jope 2000, Pl. 258b). It has a band of infilled triangles either side of the front terminals and enamel spots inset into the curvilinear design. While the polychrome enamels on the Trenoweth, Cornwall collar are inset spots, the tubular collar is edged with an incised repeated triangle pattern, the inward facing triangles infilled with stippling (Megaw 1967; Jope 2000, Pl. 259a). The use of brass in each case, rather than bronze, is consistent with a date broadly contemporary with the south Wales pieces.

This geometric polychrome enamelling technique is a regional expression of a widespread trend in Britain. For example, it is paralleled on the late northern British swords from Asby Scar and Embleton in Cumbria and Thorpe Hall, East Yorkshire (Stead 2006, Cats. 203, 205 and 214; Rigby 2006, 118–21). The Asby Scar sword has enamelled triangles defining bronze rectangles on its hilt end, also with extensive use of incised decoration and it is regarded as decorated with Stage VI motifs (Stead 2006, 17, Table 4). The bordered enamelled cells on the Embleton sword hilt and scabbard, combined with the use of cable bordering decoration and an incised chequer-board pattern on the scabbard closely echoes the trends evident in south Wales. The enamelled triangles on the slightly later scabbard chapes from Housesteads, South Shields and Chesters are also relevant (Macgregor 1976, Cats. 166, 168 and 170).

This style is also found on a range of horse pieces – terrets, strap unions, bridle bits and toggles – from across Britain, but especially northern Britain and East Anglia (e.g. Spratling 1972; Macgregor 1976; Hutcheson 2004). Some prominent associations and examples have already been cited *(see above)*, but a number of further parallels can be found (e.g. Spratling 1972, Cats. 77, 80, 180, 232 and 237; Macgregor 1976, Cat. 10; Taylor and Bradford 1985, Cat. 25). In northern Britain and East Anglia, there are also belt fittings, mounts, fasteners and massive armlets, which are ascribed to the later first and second centuries AD. It has also long been apparent that many decorated brooches of the later 1st and 2nd centuries AD across Britain have similar jewelled enamel designs (Leeds 1933, 105; Bayley and Butcher 2004, 159–68).

Perhaps less commented upon to date, is the allied increase in the frequency of repeated triangle recesses either infilled with red glass of Iron Age tradition or as incised borders, sometimes with in-filled line-work decoration. Though perhaps less formally geometric, this repetition of the same motif or element seems to be another manifestation of stylistic change. There are repeated red glass filled triangles on a number of terrets, a toggle and the quadrilobed strap union in the Polden Hills hoard (Brailsford 1975, Pls. XVIIa and g, XVIIIc, XXIc and XXIIIa). Similar technique is witnessed on a flat ringed terret from Swanton Morley, which also has a punched dot border (Palk 1988, Cat. 314; Hutcheson 2004, Cat. 137).

Careful observation of the pendant hooks in the Seven Sisters hoard has revealed a zig-zag border surviving on one, effectively defining a border of interlinked triangles around the crescent ends (Appendix 9.1: 04.137). Identical borders are found around the enamelled zones on the side plates of the Chepstow strap union (Taylor and Brailsford 1985, Cat. 26; Jope 2000, Pl. 295f), while the same is viewed on the rectangular shaped tankard handle from Greenhill, Dorset (Corcoran 1952, 99 and Pl. X.6). This latter artefact has two zones of interlinked and incised triangles, carefully confined within long incised vertical rectangles themselves placed laterally either side of a mid-line groove and the handle has been tin plated (Spratling 1972, Cat. 366). One of the Seven Sisters tankard handles and the Newstead handle also have zig-zag scorper and rocked tracing lines on them (Appendix 9.1: 04.142; Macgregor 1976, Cat. 290). While not formally geometric, general parallel can be seen with the Greenhill tankard handle.

This trend is also witnessed on three of the enamelled terrets in the Westhall, Suffolk hoard, where a series of incised triangles is located between the ridge on the inner edge of the ring and the ornamental crescent (Clarke 1940; Spratling 1972, Cats. 72–4). Alternate triangles are filled with punched dots, another of the newly popular decorative techniques *(see above)*. This hoard has generally been dated to the third quarter of the 1st century AD (Clarke 1940, 68–9; Spratling 1972, 308–9;

Macgregor 1976, 43). Further examples from Norfolk with this technique are known (Hutcheson 2004, Cats. 131 and 133; Palk 1988, Cat. 189).

The same effect is also present on the side plate and boss of one of the shields in the Tal-y-Llyn, Gwynedd hoard (Savory 1964; 1966b; Jope 2000, 71–4; Pls. 96–8). The better preserved of the pelta shaped side plates has a triskele motif, surrounded by a repeated triangular border. The outer row of triangles is infilled with linear hatchwork, complementing the ‘mirror-style’ basket-work hatching of the negative spaces around the central triskele motif. A chequer board pattern of hatched rectangles on the outer edge of this shield side plate also closely recalls the decoration on the late Embleton scabbard (Macgregor 1976, Cat. 145; Stead 2006, Cat. 205, Fig. 101). In addition, one of the shield bosses has a central triskele motif, which is bordered by an outward facing circle of triangles. Rocked tracer work on the second shield boss and the trapezoid face plaques, and a trellis pattern border on one of the openwork discs (Savory 1964, Fig. 7), highlights the contemporary popularity of incised techniques, as discussed above. Taken in conjunction with the use of brass, the tinned plates and the Roman lock plate in this hoard, this adds confirmation to the now established view that the hoard belongs to the 1st century AD. If contemporary with the wider stylistic trend, a date of manufacture and burial between AD 50–75 can be suggested.

To take these parallels one step further, the decorated panel above the handle on the Carrickfergus tankard, Co. Antrim is another late and unusual piece, whose incised infilling derives from the ‘mirror-style’ ornament (Raftery 1984, 223–5; Jope 2000, 228–9; O’Neill 2002). It has an identical repeated triangle border, the exterior inward facing triangles infilled with linear hatchwork. This tankard has been seen as first century AD in date and now a date around AD 50–75 can be suggested. This is in accord with the stylistic parallels cited by Raftery, the Greenhill tankard handle and the Snowdon Bowl, who saw its possible manufacture in north Wales as a late example of the ‘mirror-style’ (Raftery 1984, 224–5 and Fig. 112). Together, both Carrickfergus and Tal-y-Llyn may plausibly be viewed as transitional pieces between the ‘mirror-style’ and the geometric style that followed it.

Fragmented motifs and the breakdown of curvilinear flow

The breakdown of curvilinear flow epitomised upon the metalwork of the true ‘mirror-style’ (Stead’s Stage V) seems to be a further aspect of stylistic change during the first century AD. Motifs once connected and integral to wider designs now appear increasingly fragmented as isolated islands surrounded by metal margins. In south Wales, the trend is best illustrated by the sequential changes observed on the large strap union from Alltwen, Neath-Port Talbot (Figure 9.15a), the Pentyrch terret, Cardiff (Figure 9.15b) and a recently reported large strap-union from Maendy hillfort, near Treorchy, Rhondda Cynon Taf (Gwilt 2007, 310; Figure 9.15c). On the Alltwen piece, individual motifs are unified within two large trumpet and circle designs, arranged as a reversed opposed pair. While the feeling of flow is maintained on the Pentyrch terret, motifs are now increasingly physically separated both on the flange and the bosses. The end stage of this process is viewed on the Maendy piece. Now, familiar motifs are simplified into triangles, halfcircles and circles. The overall design is separated into five enamelled zones, and while there are elements of reflection and symmetry, all aspect of flow and interlinkedness is gone. The effect is heightened by the use of yellow glass insets within bronze borders, themselves captured within red glass zones. This piece is distinctively ‘chunky’ in manufacture, hinting that there may also have been a later trend towards the manufacture of heavy pieces, also echoed on the Snowdon Bowl, the Boverton collar (Figure 9.14c), the Brecon mirror handle (Figure 9.13b) and certain heavy brooch forms from north Wales (Chapman*pers*. comm.).

One could posit an overlapping chronological sequence of AD 1–70 for Alltwen, AD 50–80 for Pentyrch and AD 60–120 for Maendy, though equally, there may have been little to separate these pieces between AD 50–75. Nevertheless, the direction of travel seems plausible. While the Alltwen strap union is a single find and therefore its date relies upon parallels (Spratling 1972, 116–8; Taylor and Brailsford 1985, Cats. 43–54; Palk 1988, Cats. 442–5; Feachem 1991) and stylistic considerations, the Maendy piece was associated with a large bronze horse bell. These are repeatedly found on Roman military sites in Britain from AD 43 onwards (e.g. Wheeler 1926, 116–7, fig 58.16; Cunliffe 1971, 112–3, Cat. 107; Webster 1995a, 55–8; Lloyd-Morgan 1997, 269–71); none can confidently be attributed as pre-Invasion. On balance, the use of yellow glass on this piece also suggests a date of manufacture no earlier than AD 50. The artefacts associated with the Pentyrch terret are not chronologically diagnostic (Savory 1966a, *though see previous discussion)*.

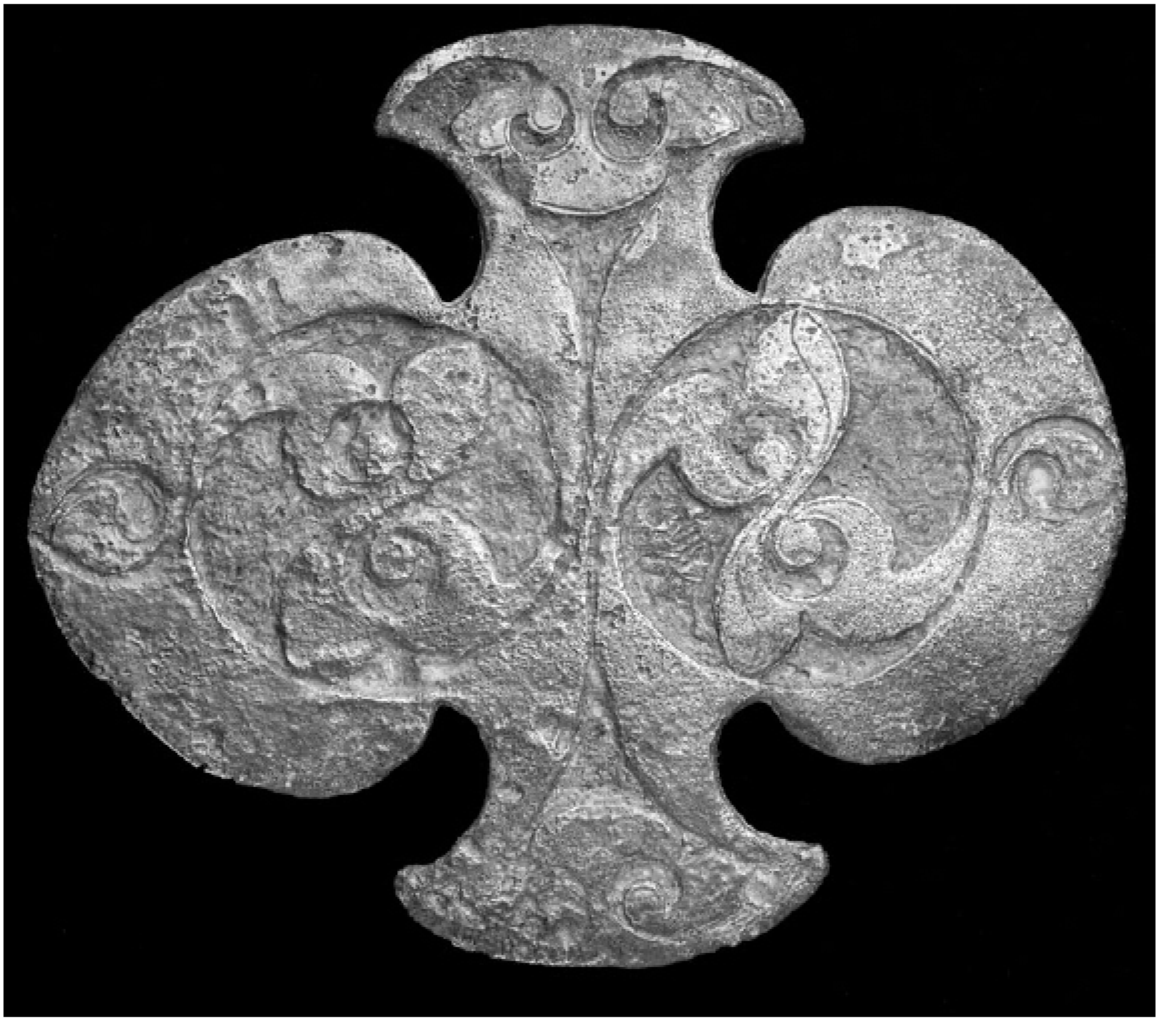


Figure 9.15a. The Alltwen strap union, Neath-Port Talbot

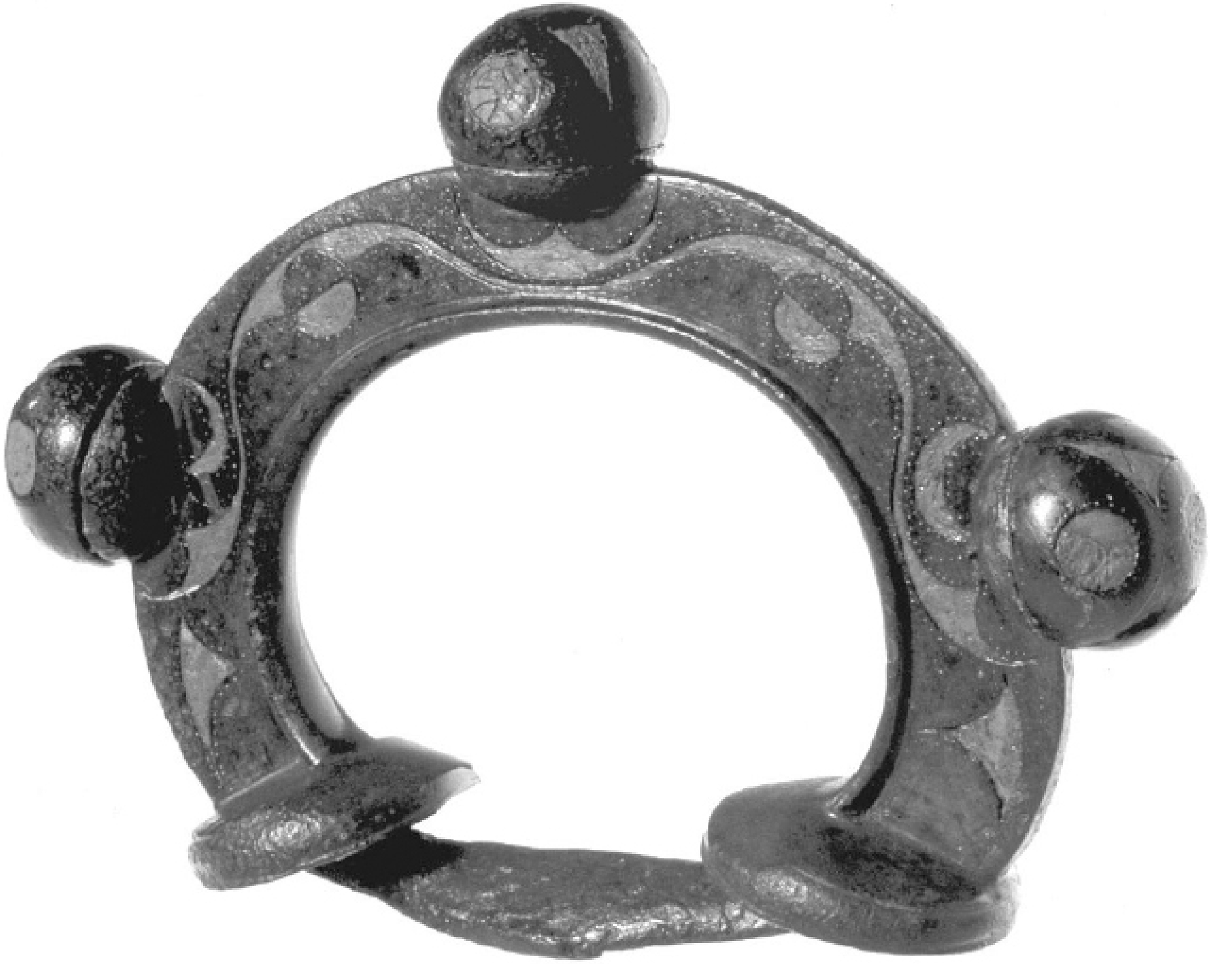


Figure 9.15b. The Pentyrch terret, Lesser Garth hoard, Cardiff

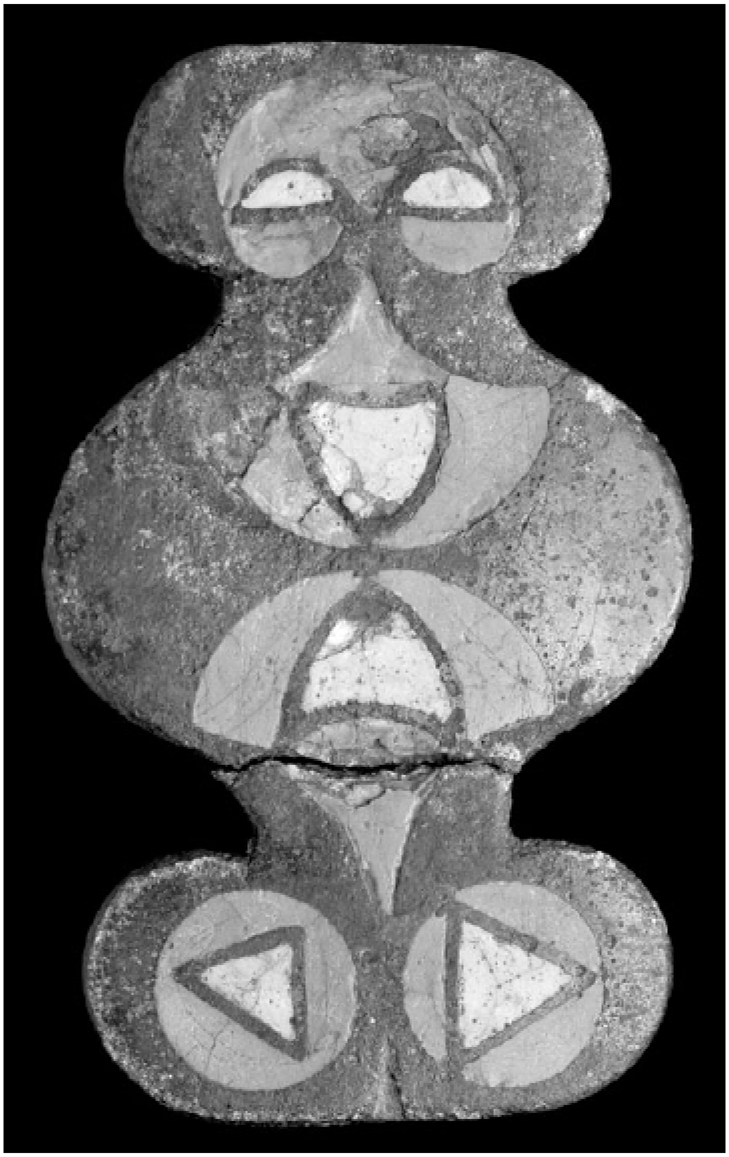


Figure 9.15c. The strap-union from Maendy hillfort, Rhondda Cynon Taf

In the light of this, the two pendant hooks with red enamel decoration in the Seven Sisters hoard (Appendix 9.1: 04.136–7), suggest a similar trend, with captured circles, isolated biconcave sided triangles and the absence of flow, although it must be admitted that here, the crescent spaces only provided for limited options. Further illustration of this trend is provided by the enamelled and decorated vessel escutcheon found in Carmarthen, within early occupation deposits belonging to *Moridunum*, the civitas capital of the Demetae (Webster 2003, 317, Cat. 56 and fig. 8.4). Circles and biconcave sided triangles infilled with Roman enamel ‘float’ across the lateral plates of this piece, in an isolated and disjointed manner. A central rectangular panel of four oblong shaped cells, also with enamel inlays also illustrates the *contemporary* trend towards geometric design *(see above*). Found in a mid to late 2nd AD context, it was repaired and probably remained in circulation for at least 50 years before burial.

Some confirmation of this trend, captured at mid-way stage, is provided through reference to the enamelled motifs upon quadrilobed strap unions (Feachem 1991, fig. 2; Jope 2000, Pl. 296–7; Hutcheson 2004, Cat. 67). These large plates provide ample space for decoration, but the overall designs, though showing symmetry and complexity, do not flow in curvilinear style. Enamelling tends to be confined to tightly spaced but discrete zones (see for example the Polden Hills, Somerset and Norton, Suffolk mounts), and isolated captured circles abound. The use of blue and yellow, in addition to red glass on many pieces is also chronologically significant, as is the range of incised zones with dot, punched and pecked decoration. Located across south western and southern England, East Anglia, and now south Wales, the associations in the Polden Hills, Westhall and Santon hoards suggest they were made and used between AD 50–75 (Clarke 1940; Spratling 1972, 304–12; Brailsford 1975, 232–4; Hutcheson 2004, 28). The zig-zag border on the example from Ober-Olm, Germany also captures a chronological convergence of stylistic developments, exhibiting both the geometric trend and an incised triangle border (Jope 2000, Pl. 297f).

Many decorated terrets also exhibit a similar breakdown of decorative motifs. In the Polden Hills hoard, many of the winged terrets are enamelled and have infilled incised motifs, which are dispersed and isolated (Brailsford 1975, Pls. XVIIb,c,g and XVIIIa,b,d; Spratling 1972, Cats. 57–8, 62–3). Further examples of this trend can be found (e.g. Spratling 1972, Cats. 44, 48–50, 52; Hutcheson 2004, Cat. 111). A number of flat ringed terrets have many captured circles and a ‘slackness’ of definition of the curvilinear decoration, which suggests a breaking down process on the later pieces (e.g. Spratling 1972, Cats. 65, 69–70, 78–9; Macgregor 1976, Cat. 62; Hutcheson 2004, Cat. 93). The incised and enamelled decoration on some linchpins also shows similar trends (Spratling 1972, Cats. 116–8; Hutcheson 2004, Cats. 47, 51 and 55).

At present, it is difficult to identify with confidence the breakdown of curvilinear flow and isolation of motifs on swords and scabbards, although candidates might include decoration on the Bardney and Congham scabbards, the suspension loops from Icklingham and Towcester, the base of the scabbard from Mortonhall, the openwork on the Asby Scar scabbard, the scabbard from Flag Fen and the crown-hilt guards from Hod Hill and Waddon Hill (Stead 2006, Cats. 102–3, 107–8, 203, 206, 222, 234, 248, 251). In the mirror series, the Nijmegen example shows a degree of isolation of motifs, which may be a chronological development rather than purely a cultural aberration (Jope 2000, Pl. 254–5), while in the collar series, the curvilinear motifs on the Trenoweth collar appears to be similarly breaking down (Jope 2000, Pl. 259).

Discrete petal motifs – single and composite

The fourth and final aspect of stylistic change observed is the increasing frequency of the use of *discrete* petal motifs. These are either repeated singly or incorporated into clusters of two, three and four. This may be no more than a particular aspect of two trends already discussed: the increasingly geometric design and the fragmentation of motifs and breakdown of curvilinear flow on La Tène decorated metalwork. Petal shaped elements were known and used on earlier metalwork, for example, often incorporated as lobes within larger trumpet motifs on Stage V or ‘mirror-style’ art (e.g. Fox 1946, 48, fig. 24; 1958, 147–8, figs. 82–3). However here, they are usually interconnected in flowing design, rather than separated and reconfigured into isolated or geometric design. Four petal geometric ‘stars’ are also present on a number of pieces with an apparent earlier ancestry (e.g. Piggott 1950, 22–3; Spratling 1972, Cat. 298; Stead 2006, Cats. 33, 87 and 89; Jope 2000 Pl. 207f and g). Nevertheless, there does seem to be an additional and distinctive late resurgence, worthy of specific comment.

Three and four-petal rosettes are incorporated in the enamelled designs upon the bridle bit, terrets and strap unions in the Seven Sisters hoard (Appendix 9.1: 04.125–8; 04.130; Figures 9.14a; 9.16a). The large strap-hook from Abergavenny (Figure 9.16b) also incorporates four-petal rosettes within its enamelled design (Savory 1993, 221–4, Illus. 14.43). Similar rosettes are seen on the terrets in the Saham Toney, Norfolk hoard (Macgregor 1976, 26, fig. 1; Spratling 1972, Cats. 91–3), while the strap-unions in both Saham Toney and Middlebie, Dumfriesshire hoards incorporate petals in both motif element and larger design forms

(Macgregor 1976, 26, fig. 1.2 and Cat. 22; Jope 2000, Pl. 278b). Petals are also recognisable on three of the terrets in the Polden Hills hoard (Brailsford 1975, Pl. XVII b and g, Pl. XVIIIa; Spratling 1972, Cats. 52, 61 and 63).

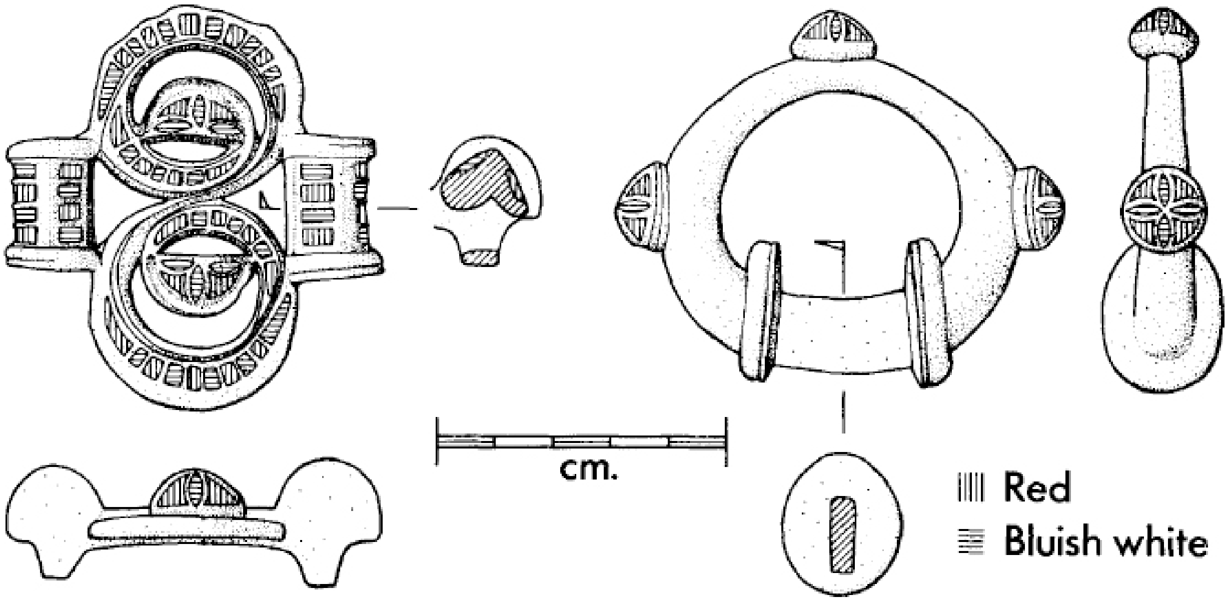


Figure 9.16a. Illustration of terret 04.128 and strap union 04.131 in the Seven Sisters hoard, showing enamelled petal motifs

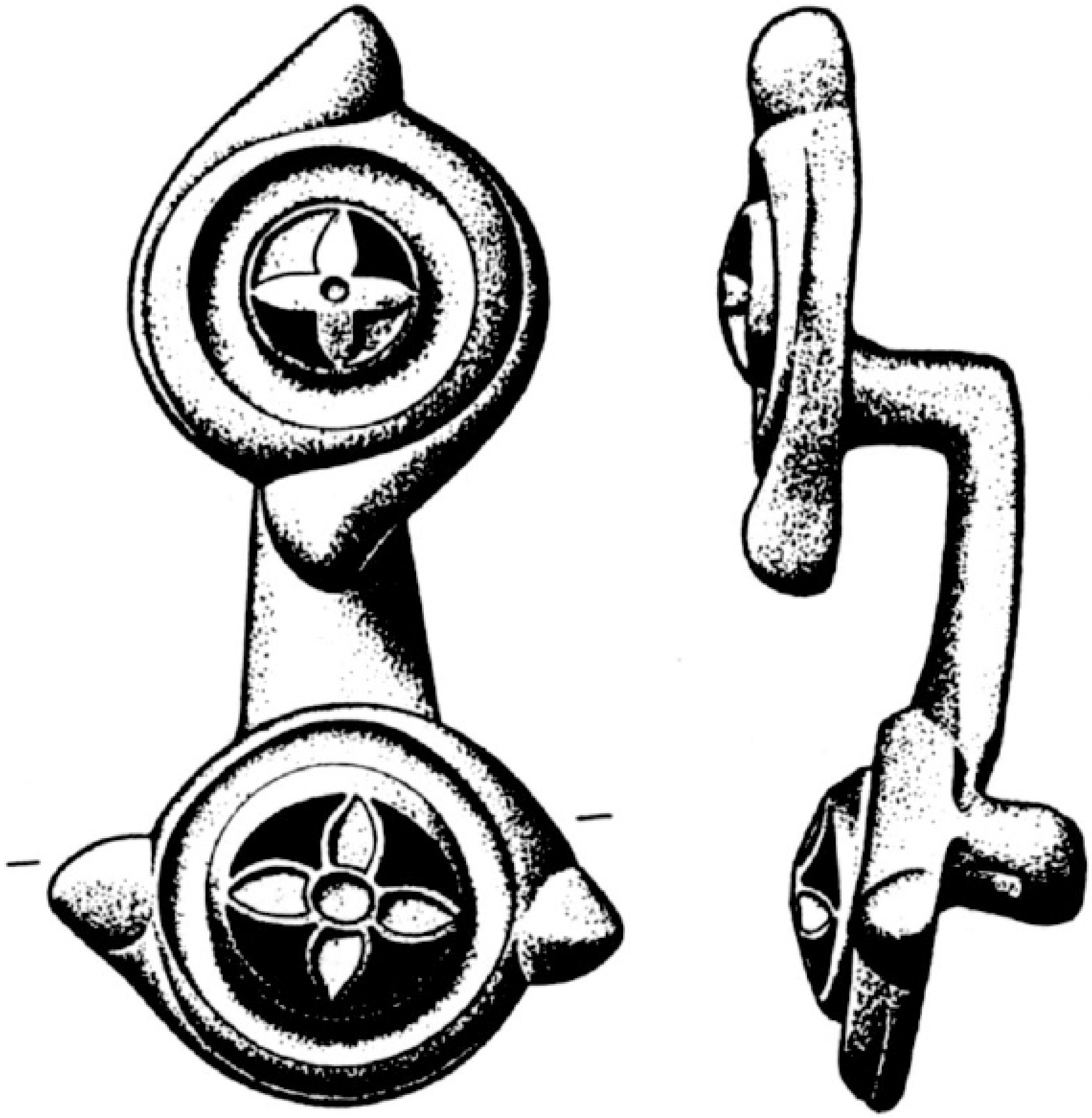


Figure 9.16b. Illustration of the strap hook from the Roman fort at Abergavenny, Monmouthshire, with petal motifs. The drawing was reproduced courtesy of the Royal Archaeological Institute from The Archaeological Journal 150, page 212. Drawn by Howard Mason

The use of twin petal motifs is also seen on a sword belt ring from High Nash, Coleford, Gloucestershire (Webster 1990; Stead 2006, Cat. 128, fig. 82; Rigby 2006, 121, fig. 34). The petals, in reserved bronze have surrounding recesses inlaid with red enamel. A recently discovered tankard handle from Castell Henllys hillfort, Pembrokeshire has a four petal ‘star’ in repoussé, on its single surviving attachment plate. A late first or early second century AD date seems likely, on stylistic grounds.

In north Wales, two face plaques in the Tal-y-Llyn, Gwynedd hoard have petals in repoussé (Savory 1964; 1966b; Jope 2000, Pl. 98a–c) and this hoard is now suggested as dating to the third quarter of the first century AD. To this may be added the isolated petal on the handle attachment of the late mirror from Llechwedd-du Bach, Gwynedd (Fox 1925, fig. 1; Jope 2000, Pl. 256a and b). Probably once associated with a burial, it was found with a lathe-turned, tinned bronze platter of early Roman form, which on stylistic grounds dates to the later first century AD (Fox 1925, 257; Boon 1980, 744; Jope 2000, 292, Cat. 256a–b). The mirror, with an undecorated plate and plain handle with three hoops, was therefore probably manufactured between AD 50–75.

To expand these observations both geographically and in terms of artefact classes, petals and four petal ‘stars’ are found on a number of scabbards (Macgregor 1976, Cat. 143; Stead 2006, Cats 101, 204, 245 and 246). The enamelled hilt end from Hod Hill also has repeated petals, infilled with blue enamel within a red enamelled surrounding band (Rigby 2006, 120–1, fig. 34). These are all late, with first century AD currency (e.g. Stead 2006; Macgregor 1976, 80–5) and it is worth comment that Stead sees a transition from Stage V to Stage VI decoration on his Group D swords and scabbards (Stead 2006, 16, Table 3 and 50). These include the High Nash, Coleford and Isleham swords, scabbards and belt ring.

Petal rosettes and stars are also seen on strap unions (e.g. Spratling 1972, Cats. 185, 195, 197 and 214), toggles (Spratling 1972, Cat. 239; Palk 1988, Cat. 353; Foster 1999, Cat. 2, fig. 52) and terrets (e.g. Bushe-Fox 1926, Pl. XIII.16; Palk 1988, Cat. 178). They are particularly prominent on the Rise, East Yorkshire bridle bit (Macgregor 1976, Cat. 10; Jope 2000, Pl. 276g), while petal strips and pairs are associated with geometric enamel cells on the Birrenswark, Dumfriesshire bridle bit (Macgregor 1976, Cat. 2; Jope 2000, Pl. 279a and b). Petals are also visible on mounts and strap junctions from northern Britain (Macgregor 1976, Cats. 15, 29, 30, 36 and 38).

Bossed petals are abundant decorative motifs on the massive armlets of northern Scotland (Macgregor 1976, Cats. 231–50). These are typically dated to the late first and early second centuries AD. Some also have geometric enamelled cells within roundels, including the Pitkelloney, Perthshire example with its four petal rosettes (Macgregor 1976, Cat. 243). Petals, isolated, repeated in strips or incorporated into flowing design are also common attributes on the heavy bronze collars of western Britain, including the Llandysul, Ceredigion collar (Megaw 1971; Beswick et al. 1991; Jope 2000, Pls. 258 and 261d). These date from the mid 1st to early 2nd centuries AD. Finally and importantly, in the Santon (Norfolk) hoard, a pan lid with bird mounts is associated with six petal incised rosettes. In addition a bucket handle from this hoard is ornately decorated with an incised and repeated petal strip, the inner borders of which are infilled with pointillé ornament (Spratling 1972, Cat. 425; Jope 2000, Pl. 166k). This hoard and its associated horse pieces have been dated to the second half of the 1st century AD (Spratling 1972, 304–8; Hutcheson 2004, 28).

Discussion

In assessing the chronological attributions suggested, some may accuse the author of chronological reductionism, succumbing to the tyranny of late Roman associations. Perhaps. However this 'Celtic' Art, *which is visible to us*, seems increasingly to be a *first century AD art*. The combination of associated evidences in Wales: the Roman horse bells, the Roman cavalry fittings, the Roman lock-plate, the Roman lamp, the Roman fort and fortress burial contexts and the use of brass, is difficult to downplay. They indicate a range of stylistic changes and developments *were* happening here, at least between AD 50–75.

While immediate pre-invasion beginnings for these developments remain a possibility, yet this part of western Britain saw few of the Gallicising and Romanising influences occurring within southern and eastern England between 200 BC–AD 43. Moreover, taking a very broad overview, it is remarkable how few early La Tène decorated artefacts have been found across Wales to date, with the prominent exceptions of the Cerrigydrudion Crown and elements within the Llyn Cerrig Bach lake assemblage. Here, the small number of decorated artefacts with probable currencies spanning the 2nd or 1st centuries BC or earlier are increasingly being swamped by significant recent discoveries of probable 1st century AD date. This contrasts with southern and eastern England, which does have established corpora of earlier decorated weapons, mirrors, horse equipment and torcs, which probably belong to the 2nd and 1st centuries

BC. This is not to deny the abundance here, of decorated metalwork also dating to the 1st century AD.

The selective native uptake of Roman technologies, such as brass and enamels seems, on current evidence, most plausible during the Campaigning period of the Roman Army, rather than much earlier. Admittedly, it remains a possibility that Late Iron Age communities in south Wales were accessing Roman materials and technologies indirectly, and even a little before the invasion of the Roman Army, by means of long-distance communications and exchanges. Here, enduring maritime contacts with the south west of England and beyond, seem most plausible. That these native stylistic trends also continued later, between AD 75–125, is also illustrated by the late manufacture of native bridle bits, weapons and mounts at Prestatyn, Flintshire (Blockley and Day 1989). Nevertheless, the overall weight of the evidence still suggests vigour of expression and development during the third quarter of the 1st century AD.

To return to the contentious issue of naming these artistic developments, is this 1st century AD art, best considered as British Art? In short and on current evidence, the answer is no, if the label is to be given cultural-ethnic connotations, in addition to a merely loose geographical definition. The concept of Britannia and British identity was arguably more in the minds of the invader than the invaded, at this early and unresolved juncture in the conquest of Britain. Wide ranging stylistic changes, communicated and effected between Iron Age societies, do not require or imply the cultural-political unification of Britain, as the term British conjures. An overview of the kingdoms and tribes of Britain on the eve of the Roman invasion, far better indicates a continuing and complex mosaic of regional and sometimes super-regional identities, yet still far from being a nascent pan-British identity. The most plausible and powerful unifying strand, at this particular juncture, was a convergence of opinion amongst many Iron Age societies towards defining themselves as ‘not Roman’ in their metalwork styles. This fortuitous shared feeling amongst native warrior elites, either against a common enemy, or at least signalling difference, is not to deny that tribal or dynastic identities could have been expressed in other areas of social and political life.

If not British, and not wishing to re-ignite the Celtic Art debate, what are the possible alternatives? Stage VI La Tène art, as a term, is only strictly valid for as long as art Stages I–V work in chronological sequence, and this now seems increasingly questionable. However, it clearly had a La Tène ancestry, while these late stylistic developments of the 1st century AD do seem chronologically to succeed the ‘mirror-style’, yet with some overlapping apparent. Neutral descriptive terms while less interpretive, can however be regarded as ‘opt outs,’ failing to capture the social and historical significance of the material in question. Until a more apt or accurate name is forthcoming, *Native Campaigning Art* is here offered.

This term gives rise to a chronologically specific ‘horizon’, bridging Iron Age to Romano-British worlds, dating perhaps between AD 40–120 in Wales and England, but ending later in Scotland. It also serves to focus attention on the phenomenon of the increased deposition of decorated metalwork at this time. Horse and chariot related display, feasting and personal ornamentation, it is argued, was an intensive expression inextricably linked with native warrior elites and their clashes with and responses to the campaigning Roman army. The name therefore aims to encapsulate something of the spirit, impulses and motivations behind the *generation* of these new styles. This is not to deny that it also came to take on a range of additional meanings and values, for example, how it was also perceived and used by Roman soldiers; secondly, how meanings changed for the first and second generation of native people *after* campaigning had ceased and living within the cultural milieu of responding to prolonged military and frontier occupation.

Conclusion (Adam Gwilt and Mary Davis)

The Seven Sisters hoard has been argued as pivotal in illustrating the range of stylistic changes that were occurring in Britain at this time. As such, it provides a benchmark and chronological corroboration for the dating of many other single artefacts and less securely dated associations across Wales and Britain. While other regions may have experienced slightly different trajectories of change and lengths of stylistic currency, the evidence from Wales and this western frontier shows changes were underway early, certainly by comparison with the traditional dating of the northern British material. It is therefore an important bridge, informing the early development and currency of these styles. This first century AD art appears to have been super-regional and not the confined expressions of regional tribal identities (though some regional stylistic variations are also tentatively emerging). In other words, this paper has attempted to demonstrate that these south Wales trends are also witnessed in south west England, East Anglia and parts of northern Britain in particular, but also less prominently across southern England. That individual artefacts and associated groups are frequently and repeatedly seen to exhibit two or more of the new trends posited, provides additional chronological consistency and validation.

Perhaps those tribes and frontier regions, which offered prolonged resistance to the Roman army or experienced prolonged military occupation, were for longer able, or more motivated to modify and develop their metalwork and art styles to suite native tastes. In southern England, these developments had begun, but seem to have been snuffed out at an early stage by rapid advances of the Roman army. At the same time, this art and decoration seems to be interlinked with the consolidation and expression of the power of native political and warrior elites, through the continued preoccupation with horse and chariot display, with drinking and personal ornamentation. The extent to which elements encountered in these decorative trends: boundary definition, the breakdown of free flow, isolation of elements and increasingly controlled symmetry and geometry, may have also echoed some of the wider social concerns at this time of cultural conflict and change, is an intriguing proposition.

Agency and chronological context are key to this interpretation. ‘Who’ made and ‘who’ employed this art, and ‘when’, seem to be the crux. Here, further analytical studies will help to clarify broader diagnostic patterns of cultural selectivity in the use of materials and techniques, while new radiocarbon dates for decorated objects will begin to enable some independent evaluation of our problematic typological schemes. However, on current evidence, it is argued that between AD 50–75, many native societies in Wales, East Anglia, south west England and northern Britain, retained the autonomy and wherewithal to make and wear their own distinctive styles of metalwork. In this art, it is argued that one can still see the agency of native or Iron Age workers exerting control and preference for native and Iron Age people, rather than dilution or decline, through the controlling hand of Roman patronage for novel products from native metalworkers. However, tipping points may have been later reached, when Iron Age styles became incorporated into the inclusive

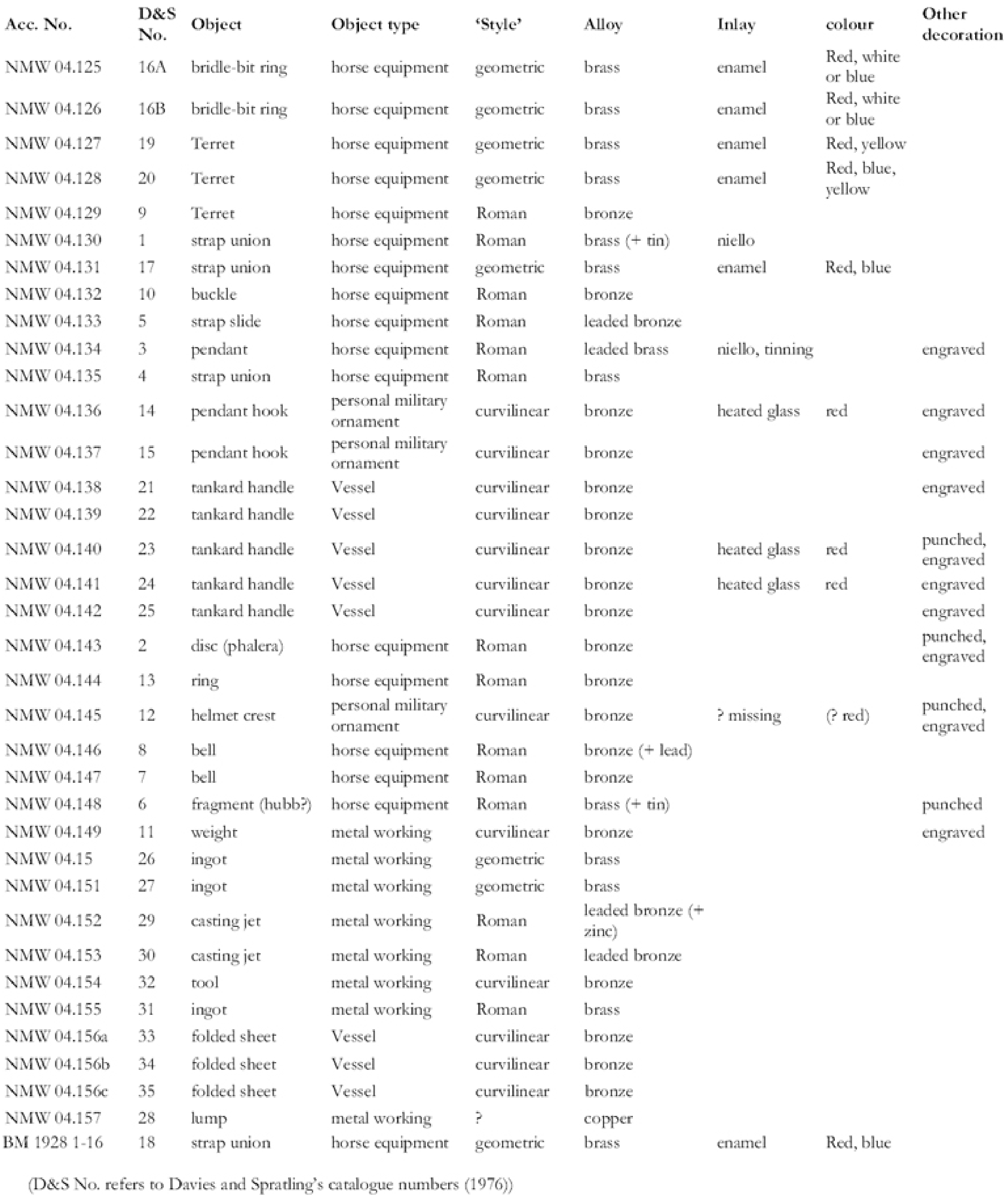
Romano-British repertoire. The evidence of native metalworking at Prestatyn in Flintshire, north east Wales from AD 100–120, yet associated with rectangular timber buildings and succeeded by a Roman bath-house, is tantalising with respect to the identity of the maker and the destined recipients (Blockley 1989, 23–46).

In conclusion, we have attempted to show how these emerging observations and trends help us to grapple afresh with broad issues of identity, cultural resistance and assimilations with Rome, in Britain during the 1st century AD.

Acknowledgements

Many people have helped with discussions and ideas, and by making material and data available; for this we wish to thank Richard Brewer, Evan Chapman, Simon James, Jody Joy, J. D. Hill, Fraser Hunter, Mark Lodwick and Mansell Spratling. Duncan Garrow encouraged us to contribute the paper, and has pursued, with determination, the much needed radiocarbon dates for artefacts under discussion here, as part of the 'Technologies of Enchantment' project. Mary Davis would like to extend particular thanks to Peter Northover for allowing us to use his data, and Ian Freestone and Niall Sharples for detailed discussions and comments.

Appendix 1: Table of objects from the Seven Sisters Hoard, their style, metal alloy and applied decoration



Acc. No.	D&S No.	Object	Object type	'Style'	Alloy	Inlay	colour	Other decoration
NMW 04.125	16A	bridle-bit ring	horse equipment	geometric	brass	enamel	Red, white or blue	
NMW 04.126	16B	bridle-bit ring	horse equipment	geometric	brass	enamel	Red, white or blue	
NMW 04.127	19	Terret	horse equipment	geometric	brass	enamel	Red, yellow	
NMW 04.128	20	Terret	horse equipment	geometric	brass	enamel	Red, blue, yellow	
NMW 04.129	9	Terret	horse equipment	Roman	bronze			
NMW 04.130	1	strap union	horse equipment	Roman	brass (+ tin)	niello		
NMW 04.131	17	strap union	horse equipment	geometric	brass	enamel	Red, blue	
NMW 04.132	10	buckle	horse equipment	Roman	bronze			
NMW 04.133	5	strap slide	horse equipment	Roman	leaded bronze			
NMW 04.134	3	pendant	horse equipment	Roman	leaded brass	niello, tinning		engraved
NMW 04.135	4	strap union	horse equipment	Roman	brass			
NMW 04.136	14	pendant hook	personal military ornament	curvilinear	bronze	heated glass	red	engraved
NMW 04.137	15	pendant hook	personal military ornament	curvilinear	bronze			engraved
NMW 04.138	21	tankard handle	Vessel	curvilinear	bronze			engraved
NMW 04.139	22	tankard handle	Vessel	curvilinear	bronze			
NMW 04.140	23	tankard handle	Vessel	curvilinear	bronze	heated glass	red	punched, engraved
NMW 04.141	24	tankard handle	Vessel	curvilinear	bronze	heated glass	red	engraved
NMW 04.142	25	tankard handle	Vessel	curvilinear	bronze			engraved
NMW 04.143	2	disc (phalera)	horse equipment	Roman	bronze			punched, engraved
NMW 04.144	13	ring	horse equipment	Roman	bronze			
NMW 04.145	12	helmet crest	personal military ornament	curvilinear	bronze	? missing	(? red)	punched, engraved
NMW 04.146	8	bell	horse equipment	Roman	bronze (+ lead)			
NMW 04.147	7	bell	horse equipment	Roman	bronze			
NMW 04.148	6	fragment (hubb?)	horse equipment	Roman	brass (+ tin)			punched
NMW 04.149	11	weight	metal working	curvilinear	bronze			engraved
NMW 04.15	26	ingot	metal working	geometric	brass			
NMW 04.151	27	ingot	metal working	geometric	brass			
NMW 04.152	29	casting jet	metal working	Roman	leaded bronze (+ zinc)			
NMW 04.153	30	casting jet	metal working	Roman	leaded bronze			
NMW 04.154	32	tool	metal working	curvilinear	bronze			
NMW 04.155	31	ingot	metal working	Roman	brass			
NMW 04.156a	33	folded sheet	Vessel	curvilinear	bronze			
NMW 04.156b	34	folded sheet	Vessel	curvilinear	bronze			
NMW 04.156c	35	folded sheet	Vessel	curvilinear	bronze			
NMW 04.157	28	lump	metal working	?	copper			
BM 1928 1-16	18	strap union	horse equipment	geometric	brass	enamel	Red, blue	

(D&S No. refers to Davies and Spratling's catalogue numbers (1976))

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10

On the Aesthetics of the Ancient Britons

Mansel Spratling

> I know a bank whereon the wild thyme blows,
> Where oxslips and the nodding violet grows
> Quite over-canopied with luscious woodbine,
> With sweet musk-roses, and with eglantine
> *A Midsummer Night's Dream, II. I*

Aesthetics is the branch of philosophy dealing with art, beauty and taste, its purpose to examine, elucidate and evaluate statements concerning theory, practice and definition (Walton et al. 1996; Scruton and Munro 2002). *The* aesthetics of x, y or z denotes a stated viewpoint expressed in words or other media, such as Shakespearean drama, Jane Austen's prose, Titian's painting, the Classical tradition in British architecture (Kernan 1995; Steiner 1975; Goffen 1997; Summerson 1993) or the look of Jean Muir, Karen Millen or Saville Row couture. No aesthetic statement or viewpoint can aspire to complete neutrality, for every one of us is conditioned by some unconscious factor or another (cf. Kitson 1994).

Our subject is British Art, the art of the Britons in that age, the Iron Age, in which we first hear of them. Use of the term Celtic for the art was initiated in 1858 by Franks who was the first to identify it as a coherent artistic tradition (Franks 1856–9; Kemble, Latham and Franks 1863, 172–96, Pls. XIV–XX). The term has stuck like a limpet to rock (cf. lately Jope 2000); whether the rock derives any benefit has still to be determined (contrast Cunliffe 1999, Megaw and Megaw 2001 and Collis 2003).

Aesthetic attitudes

We have to distinguish between our own aesthetic attitudes and those that the makers of our objects of study imbued them with, for we can never assume that they dovetail. Detailed study of artefacts enables us to probe the logic of the thought processes that go into their making. Every artefact holds latent evidence of thinking, for none can be made without it. This directs our attention towards the Britons' own aesthetics, towards what they considered to be the legitimate framework, means and content of expression. This entails clarifying visual meaning which will give further impetus to the study of symbolic content and belief (cf. Ross 1974; Green 1996). We can thus reduce dependence upon our own preconceptions and increase knowledge of the Britons' response to their art and to those of their contemporaries in western Eurasia.

A nice smile apart, it is generally agreed that there is no universal standard of beauty and that no unanimity can be reached as to what is good, bad or indifferent (were there so, everyone would want the same boy or girl). Diversity at both the communal and individual level is a keynote of aesthetic attitudes (she wants Habitat, he IKEA, they John Lewis). Despite this, common features can be discerned in modes and styles of behaviour, production, use and deposition (clubbing, cloning, texting and binning). The number of agreed choices in ancient societies appears always to have been quite restricted, as they often still are. In Cave Art animals are shown side on and with two not four legs (cf. Ucko and Rosenfeld 1967), while we can only buy televisions with rectangular screens. Through the archaeological record we can observe our ancestors making choices and expressing preference (mirrors with chased or engraved line, mirrors with symmetrical or asymmetrical patterns).

In coming to grips with ancient aesthetics, we need to identify those strands in our own thinking which may colour what we are attempting to discover. One such is our predilection for straight lines and circles which we have come to take for granted, even though they are human abstractions, absent from nature. There are profound differences between them and the shape of the sun and full moon and sunbeams falling through clouds which are solid figures which neither a circle nor a straight line is. Both the circle and the straight line continue to be claimed for the British Neolithic (cf. Bradley 1998; Case 2004; Cummings, Jones and Watson 2002), but it is not clear how well grounded the evidence is. We have, for example, to decide whether it is the outer or inner face of a structural ring that we are interested in; to have both is to have nothing (cf. Fernie 1991, 1–2). What in the Neolithic is straight? What kind of a circle is not true?

A few things can be salvaged from the current methodological confusion. For example, the exterior dimensions of the bedding trench for an oblong mortuary enclosure at Fussell’s Lodge, Wiltshire, 133 by 38½ feet, proportion 7:2 (3½:1) to an accuracy of about one foot (data abstracted from Ashbee 1966, Pl. l). At Skendleby 2, Lincolnshire the accuracy was greater (Evans and Simpson 1991: bisection of the central deep section of the timber facade by a fence). These indications of accurate measurement do not necessarily signify that the builders knew what a straight line was or could do for them. The irregular plans show that they were not interested in giving the straight line architectural embodiment – a world away from contemporary fourth millennium Egypt where the straight line already mattered. We have consciously to remember how different Egypt was from Britain. Egyptians were early pioneers in mathematics as were Mesopotamians (Neugebauer 1969; Rossi 2004), but it is not at all clear what the Britons knew.

Straightness is a feature of Rome’s first interstate, the Appian Way *(via appia antica)*, constructed in the late fourth century BC, which I did not come to see until August 1975, two decades after reading of it in Latin class at prep school. Figure 10.1a was taken just after a thunderstorm in the open, my principal terror, an indication therefore of the lengths I am prepared to go to get a slide for a lecture. This view represents the aesthetic foundation upon which western archaeology is built. In 1515 Raphael was given Europe’s first archaeological appointment, Commissioner of Antiquities at Rome, which through the newly discovered Neronian frescoes of the Domus Aurea (an untapped source for our studies of British Art) had a major impact upon the products of his workshop in the city up to his death in 1520 and upon those of his colleagues thereafter (Dacos 1969; 1977; Jones and Penny 1983; for the thought and rising status of Raphael and his fellow artists see Ames-Lewis 2000).

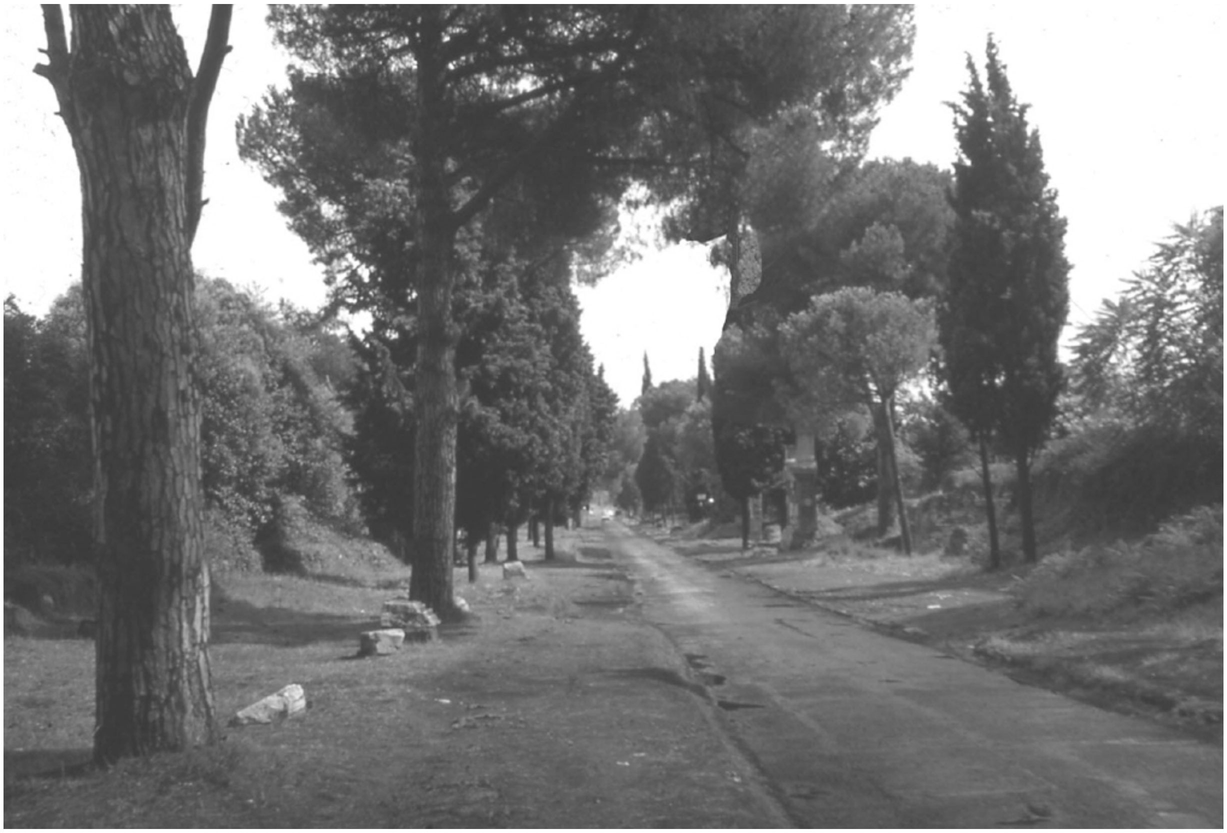


Figure 10.1a. Looking down the Appian Way (photo by the author). Reproduced in colour on page 225

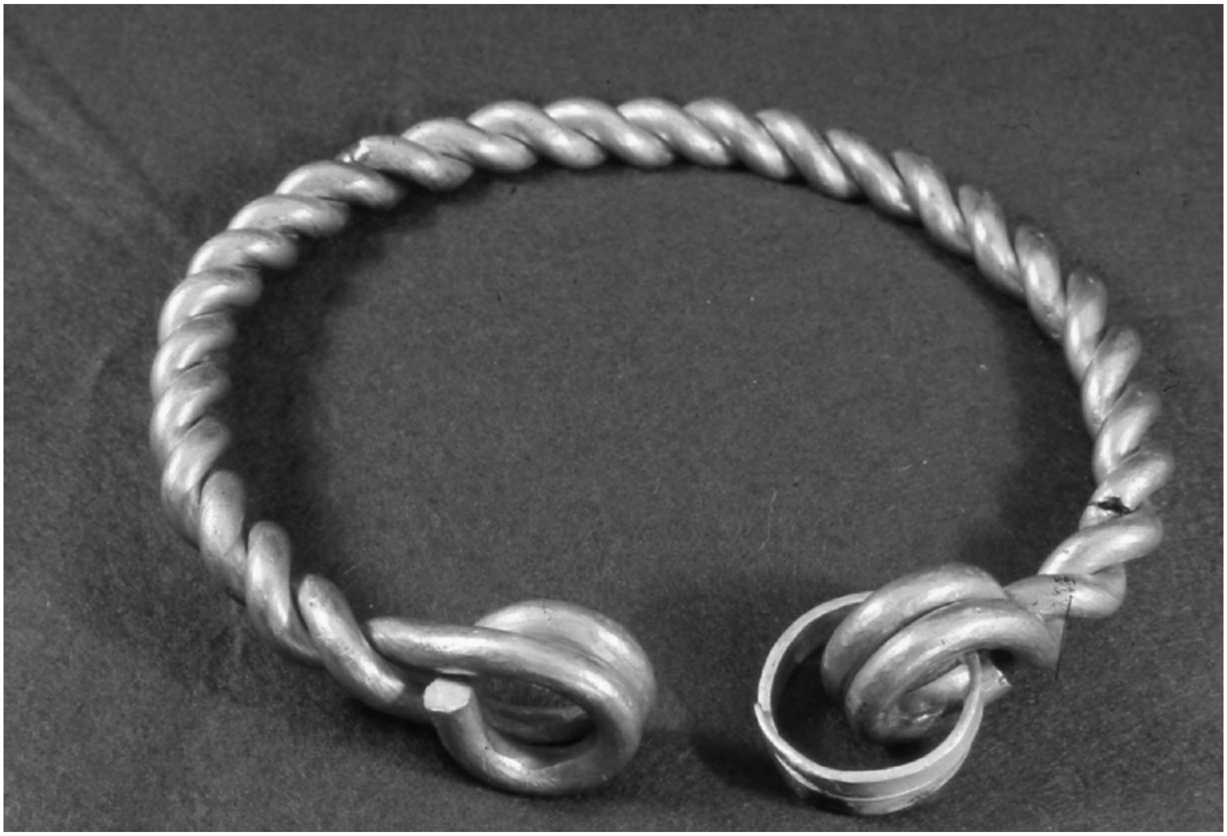


Figure 10.1b. Torc D from Snettisham (photo by the author). Reproduced in colour on page 225

Dodging speeding Fiats on what we would now call a rat-run, I walked alone down the road for a couple of miles (no tourists this far from the Colosseum), wistfully eyeing an aqueduct across the fields, having a thing about the round ears of my teddy bear and about the round arches of the Romanesque and Railway ages, and having swum on my back the previous summer under the *Défense-de-nager-sous-le* Pont du Gard in the sensual Provençal sun. I came to appreciate why in art Venus is so partial to a dip in the warm Mediterranean Sea, even if there were too many français(es) about for me to be nu too.

Aesthetics colours our thinking in often subtle ways. The term ‘work of art’ incorporates a clear aesthetic component just as by omission ‘artefact’ does not, which reduces all to that same neutral level of commonality which is the prerequisite for archaeological systematics. Students of British Art tend to take form, the shape of a thing, for granted – MacGregor’s *Early Celtic Art in North Britain* (1976) is an exception – in the same way that art historians only occasionally pay heed to the character of the rectangle within which a painter constructs his image (cf. Tucker 1998, 11).

The shape of every sheet of paper in the A-Series is determined by the proportion 1:√2 (1:1.414), where 1 is the side of a square and √2 (1.414) is the diagonal. This proportion gives us the Birdlip and Old Warden Mirrors (both 1:1.415; Old Warden measures 200 by 283 mm, Birdlip now 269 by 387 but originally I judge 272 by 385 mm (Spratling 1970, 9; 1972, no. 335; Jope 2000, Pls. 244–8)). The proportion has long been used by western painters to frame their images. Two recent paintings, both in London, may be cited: Andy Warhol's *Marilyn Diptych* of 1962 and David Hockney's *Mr and Mrs Clark with Percy* of 1970–1 (the Warhol 2896 by 4108 mm (1:1.418), the Hockney 2134 by 3048 mm (1:1.428) (Wilson 1991, 243, 253)). The Hockney in fact gives us the whole-number approximation 7:10 to 1:√2 perennially used since antiquity, for example, in four of our mirrors, Dorton, Holcombe, Llechwedd du bach and St. Keverne (Farley 1983, 282; Spratling 1972, nos. 343–4 and 351; Jope 2000, Pls. 239b, 240a, 242a, 252a–b and 256a). Another whole-number approximation, 5:7 (1:1.4) was used for the Portesham Mirror (Fitzpatrick 1997, 58); a third, 12:17 (1:1.417), has not yet been detected in the British Iron Age. If we return to the Hockney, we can see that the 7 by 7 square from which the 7 by 10 rectangular image is developed (in feet, it exactly happens) structures the composition in a rather telling way for the artist. From the left (view it at www.artchive.com) the right hand side of the square rises up through the paws of the cat seated on fashion-guru Ossie Clark's lap. Hockney emphasises his own sexuality by calling the cat Percy, even though it was the Clarks' other cat which was called that. Here we see geometry given particular meaning that would be very difficult for a prehistorian to construe. There is more than a hint of ambiguity in the painted image, for not only are Ossie and the pussy (a female) located on the edge of the square (a word signifying conventionality and heterosexuality) but his wife is exactly centred within it. As Ossie's best man, Hockney appears to be telling us something not evident about the sitter's character.

Our low-key interest in form per se runs counter to research into the history of buildings (cf. Fernie 1993; Heslop 1994; Kidson 1995; Wittkower 1988). In consequence students of British Art pay much less attention to those categories of artefacts such as ceramics and bone (only 1% of the plates in Jope's 2000 study) in which form is the prime consideration and which bear relatively little ornament. Bernard Leach might just as well never have made a pot at St. Ives and Mies van der Rohe or Lloyd Wright the Seagram or the Guggenheim in New York.

An aesthetic model has determined interpretation of Gallo-Belgic coinage for more than a century. That the successive designs devolve is based upon the view that Hellenistic representational art was normative in Gaul where the coins appear to have been struck (cf. Haselgrove 1999) and that the Gauls and Britons had no norms of their own (cf. Evans 1864). While this may once have been a reasonable interpretation, 20th century research has shown that they did (cf. Megaw 1970; Megaw and Megaw 2001). The notion of devolvement took hold with the late 19th century anthropological model of artistic change known as 'degeneration theory', propounded by Balfour (1893), Haddon (1895) and Pitt-Rivers (1875/1906). The theory held that "slavish copying of a naturalistic representation led to purely geometric forms" (Willett 1971, 31). Gallo-Belgic coinage was used to support the thesis (Balfour 1893, viii; Haddon 1895, 313–14; Pitt-Rivers 1875, 515 = 1906, 40–1, Pl. XXI; cf. Evans 1875).

While this application of the theory has lasted and lasted in numismatics and archaeology (cf. Allen 1961; Grierson 1975, 16, 76), with a hallucinogenic twist lately added by Creighton (2000), the theory was long ago demolished in anthropology by Boas (1927/1955). New life was breathed into it by the historian and philosopher Collingwood (1930, 40) who nonetheless abandoned it by the time he came to write his influential aesthetic treatise The *Principles of Art* (Collingwood 1938). This may well have been occasioned by the Third Reich's notorious confiscations of Modern Art and 1937 exhibition *Entartete Kunst* [Degenerate (Modern) Art] which forever discredited a theory which had hitherto held no overtly racist overtones (Kühnel 1996; Brilliant 1996; Dube 1972, 208–11). Collingwood's authority (q.v. Collini and Williams 2004) led to renewed application of the theory in archaeological and numismatic circles (Brooke 1933; Leeds 1933), to which there was a long afterglow (cf. Fox 1958; Allen 1961; Sandars 1968, 268 (= 1995, 415) q.v. Spratling 1970, 11).

The character of art

I shall not attempt to define British Art. The conventional canon encompasses ornament or pattern and animal/human/supernatural images in metal and other media. As I have noted, form per se is only rarely discussed (only compare Fox 1958; Megaw 1970; Stead 1996; Jope 2000; Megaw and Megaw 2001 and 2005, and uncounted particular studies). Images are often disguised as pattern or can be read as both; it also seems that the language of pattern was used to construct imagery. It can be hard to know quite where one is in this domain (cf. Megaw 1970; Spratling 1971). Much has been made of this ambiguity, but we must always remember that some of it is likely to be a function of the conceptual distance between Then and Now, between Them and Us. It is often hard enough for us to construe what debit and credit on a utilities bill mean. It is also likely that visual ambiguity was enhanced to protect privacy of meaning. Attempts to maintain such privacy may underlie the denials anthropologists sometimes receive (“No, that’s not a face”) when probing visual meaning (cf. Forge 1973, 177). There is some irony in our reluctance to divulge to callers from the Sub-Continent details of our monthly mobile bill. “What, tell you how often I tell her what lovely eyes she has? You didn’t tell me your name was Malinowski.”

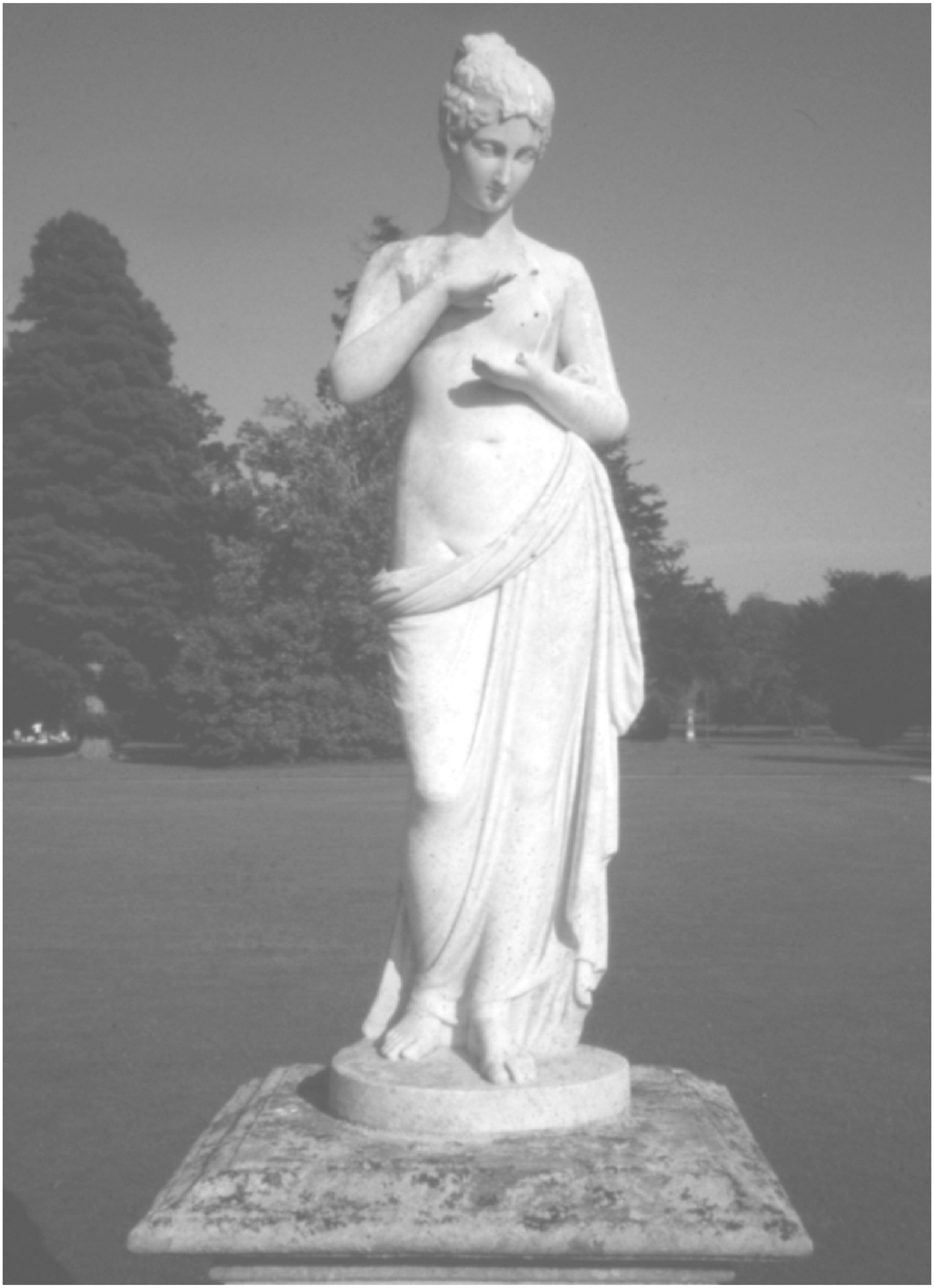


Figure 10.2. Psyche by Canova (copy), Wrest Park, Beds. (photo by the author). Reproduced in colour on page 226

Our frequent anxiety as to what is and is not Art seems misplaced, since its terms of reference are perennially shifting like dunes of sand (cf. for the Western tradition Clark 1969; Gombrich 1989 (and the many other editions) and Hughes 1991). That they continue to shift is part of our Angst. Evolution cannot, however, be halted. Essentially Art has come to mean what some galleries sell and others buy. Since the Art World is rarely interested in our subject matter – an exception is the Arts Council's *Early Celtic Art* exhibition of 1970 (Piggott 1970) – it is clear that British Art as here delineated lies towards the edge of what Art is considered to be. The principal merit of this is that it helps to keep prices down. At the British Museum the Battersea Shield is first an antiquity and only second a work of art. This should make us pause, lest we use the terms British and Celtic Art too freely.

What matters with art is less what it is and more reaction and response. When the National Gallery buys a little work (about a quarter of the area of the Battersea Shield) by Raphael for a fabulous sum (Chapman, Henry and Plazzotta 2004, no. 59), it acts in accordance with a consensus of opinion appropriate to its field of interest. (Per square inch this is the most valuable painting.) Others have deemed that a dead sheep is worth a Turner Prize, and still others that a British mirror plus silver brooch was worth (in effect) a top-of-the-range BMW 5-Series with nice options (as my local dealer put it; I did tell him why I wanted to know).

I cannot tell whether a British Iron Age shield, mirror or torc is any the more or the less to be counted as art than Raphael's little Madonna of the Pinks or Damien Hirst's sheep. Let me simply compare art to a cloud in the sky, which from a maximum density of so many litres of ice per cubic metre of air gradually diminishes to clear blue. Where clouds and art begin and end cannot readily be told.

Damien Hirst's sheep provides a useful object lesson in attempting to elucidate the character of art. The sheep is first of all a perfect specimen, its fleece well shorn and unruffled by blackthorn or barbed wire. Unlike so many of its contemporaries it is above all a healthy specimen, suffering from neither foot-and-mouth nor ovine spongiform encephalopathy (bovine variant or no). In fact, it is ideally suited for Sunday dinner garnished with redcurrant jelly and a sprig or two of mint. Not that any sheep with these unfortunate conditions could be exhibited, given the stringent regulations governing the disposal of their carcases. Perfection in execution and in preservation, the amputated Venus de Milo apart (Gombrich 1989, fig. 64), are crucial factors in adjudging what art is. Compare Figure 10.2, a copy of a Psyche by Canova at Wrest Park, Bedfordshire. Originality is another crucial factor. Few things are more original than presenting a dead sheep to the viewing public as a work of art and than awarding a prize to a domestic animal which is not alive and bleating at an agricultural show.

Visual impact and aesthetic experience

Viewing distance is crucial to aesthetic experience, to the appreciation of a visual work of art. (As is volume to music and drama.) Stand too far off and we see little, come too close and the image dissolves into technical detail. We are not given much visibility when we contemplate what we perceive to be British Art. Let us take a principal product of the early mature, Torrs-Wandsworth phase, of about the third century BC, the Witham scabbard mount (Jope 2000, Pls. 50–1; Stead 2006, no. 36). Figure 10.3, my life-size drawing of it, must be steadily recessed step by step from the eyes to test its visibility. We have to bear in mind that the black on white of this drawn image enhances its visibility. Beyond sword-range (arm plus sword), in this case about 1.2 m or 4 feet, only the relief work and little of the chased or engraved linework can be clearly seen. Only when the mount is handled, can the work be fully appreciated. This is true of a large proportion of British Art. You could not have seen much of the harness of a horse without proffering it an apple nor much of a chariot’s fittings as it sped by at a maximum speed of about 20 m.p.h. (30 km) (Pam Figgis, pers. comm.), nor much of a brooch’s design or a torc’s ornament without being invited to come close, so close as would otherwise transgress private space.

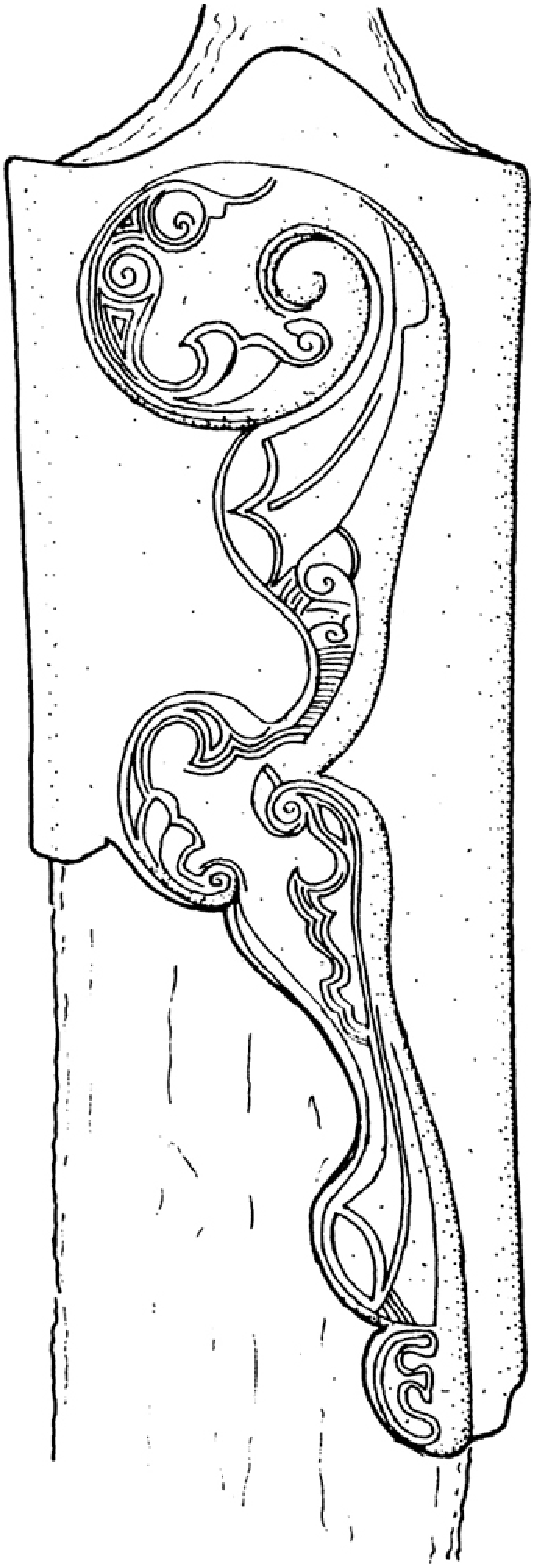


Figure 10.3. Scabbard mount from the River Witham (scale 1:1; drawn by the author)

A likely companion piece to the scabbard mount is the Witham Shield, at 1.13 m (3 foot 8) long the largest surviving specimen of British Iron Age non-ferrous metalwork (Jope 2000, Pls. 60, 62–8; Megaw and Megaw 2001, Pl. XIX). Only the 1.43 m (4 foot 8) iron stand from Welwyn rises higher (Jope 2000, Pl. 309g). Hoisted above a rampart the shield would only have cut visual ice, if the lost boar figure had been both in repoussé relief to cast shadow and of contrasting colour such as silver or tin. The Queen's three yellow leopards on red which date back to the reign of Edward III are a quite different visual matter. In Medieval heraldry we see the beginnings of a clear understanding of the problems in visual communication which via naval signalling with flags has only been mastered with the advent of the contemporary poster and cartoon. Except in matters of pure form: there are few more impressive visual statements than Maiden Castle from the north or a mile of Roman aqueduct.

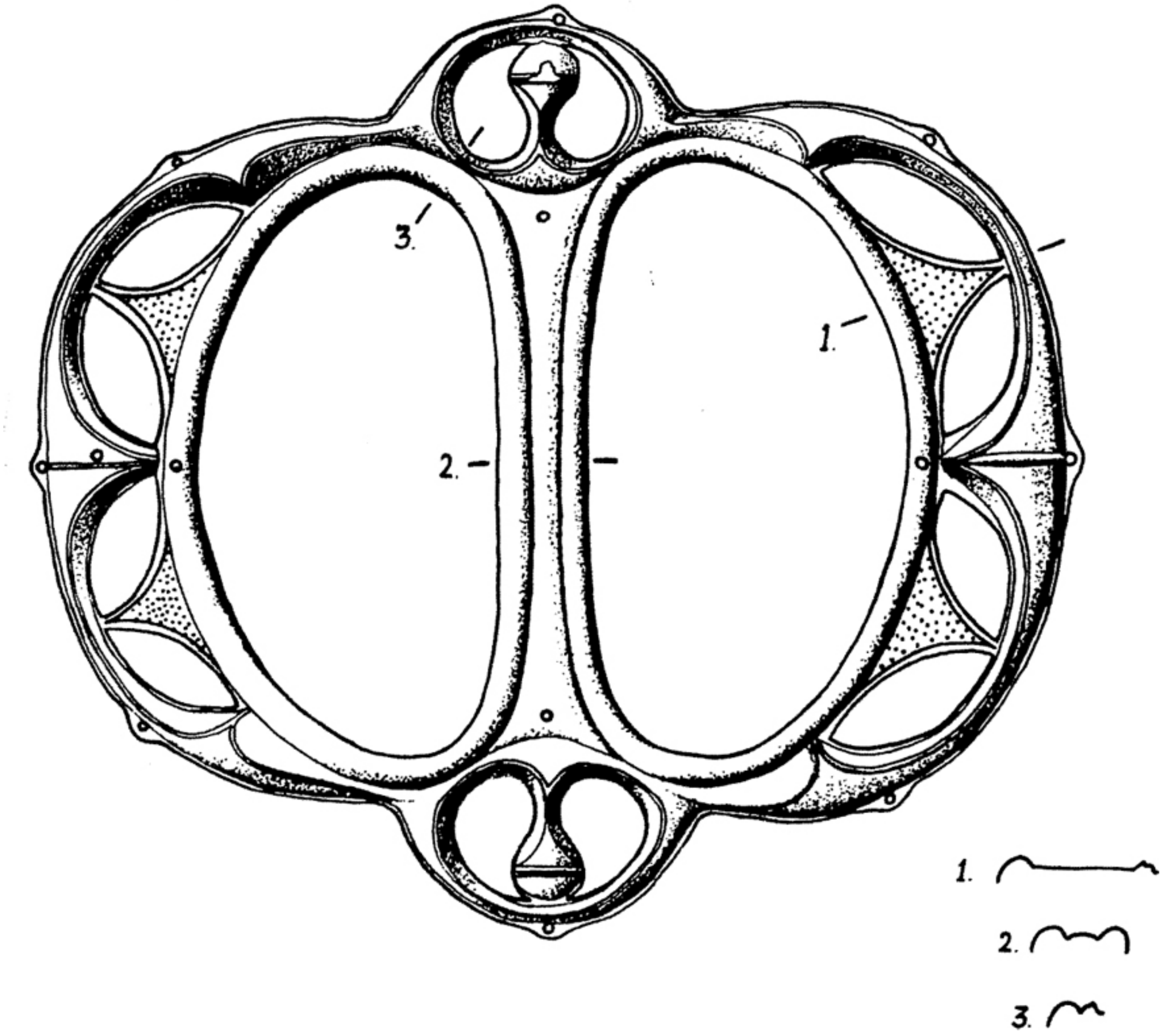


Figure 10.4a. Handle mount of the Battersea shield (scale 3.4; drawn by the author)

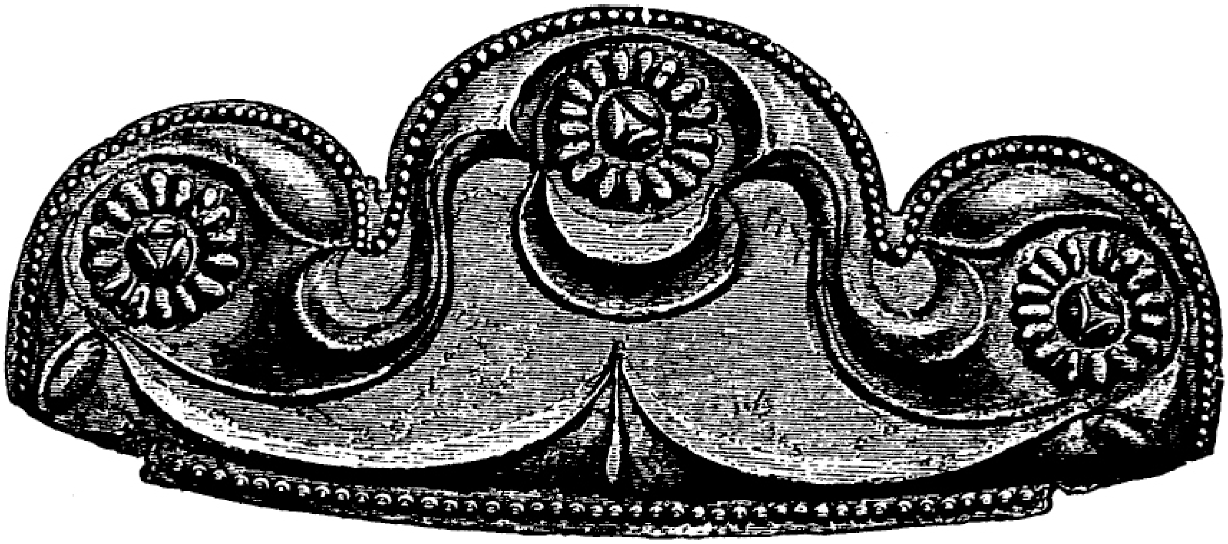


Figure 10.4b. Decorative escutcheon from the Balmacllan mirror (scale 1:1; after Anderson 1883)

At no more than a few paces could you have seen that the Battersea Shield had 27 studs, 9 to each of its 3 roundels. 3 roundels, 3 × 3 studs per roundel, 3 × 3 × 3 studs in all. These were favoured quantities in Early Irish and Welsh oral tradition (Rees and Rees 1961, 192–5). To have seen such features as the studs' swastica frames, the lines of spaced dots and the rustication of the bronze's surface with a fine centre-punch (Stead 1985, figs. 2 and 4–6, Pls. II–VI and VIII–X; Jope 2000, Pls. 76–81), you would have had to come close, to reading distance or closer, depending on your vision. The 3^3 studs on the shield can be matched in the 27 twists of the only tore (D) buried on its own at Snettisham (Spratling 1976, no. 122) (Figure 10.1b). 2^3 occurs twice on the Snettisham E torc, 8 strands of 8 wires each, 64 wires in all (ibid., no. 125a). The Needwood Forest torc also has 8 strands but of 4 wires each. Here the strands are twisted together in pairs (ibid., no. 123).

We can interject here a few lines on the controverted dating of the Battersea shield. The latest new feature is the repeated double swag and drop motif on the handle mount (Figure 10.4a; Spratling 1972, fig. 131; Jope 2000, Pl. 79e) which is matched in technique too on the decorative escutcheons on the Balmaclellan Mirror (Anderson 1883, title figure and figs. 103–4; MacGregor 1976, no. 273; Jope 2000, Pls. 252e, 253f) (Figure 10.4b). That the mirror has a strongly Romanising handle derived from paterae has long been recognised. *Contra* Henderson (in Jope 2000, 351) the ‘low-manganese’ glass of the Battersea Shield had a long life after 100 BC in Britain, lasting into the Roman period (cf. Freestone, Stapleton and Rigby 2004, Table 1, nos. 2 and 6).

In sum, British Art though confident was a modest one, ill-suited for public display or ceremony. It seems to have been intended for quiet contemplation, the equivalent of listening to A *Book at Bedtime* and *The Shipping Forecast*. As we pore over well-illustrated books and papers with drawings and photographs at full and greater scale, it is easy to get the wrong impression of the art’s actual visual impact. Until the end of the Iron Age society among the Britons remained small-scale and domestic. To that the art seems well suited. We omit from the conventional body of British Art the monumental and the spectacular, like multivallate fortifications such as those visible over there at Maiden Castle and way up there at Hambledon Hill, both in Dorset. In common with our low-key interest in form we pay them little interest as specimens of sculpted landscape. Nature rather than artifice may, however, have been the spectacle. Both Farley (1983, 269) and Fitzpatrick (1997, 52) have commented on the views from mirror burial sites over the Vale of Aylesbury and along the Dorset and Devon coasts, to which we may add the view over the Vale of Gloucester to the Black Mountains from the Birdlip mirror burial site atop the Cotswold escarpment. But Nature demands intimate observation too. Hence the lines from Shakespeare at the head of this paper.

Pattern and imagery

British Art used primarily to be regarded as abstract pattern (cf. Leeds 1933; Fox 1958; Sandars 1968), but Jope (2000) and in particular Megaw (1970; Megaw and Megaw 2001) have shown it to be full of visual imagery and thus a variant of the inhabited scroll arts of western tradition which reach down from Classical antiquity via Byzantium and Islam to Medieval, Renaissance and the Modern (Arts and Crafts, Art Nouveau, Liberty’s and Sanderson’s) (cf. Peterson et al. 1996). This newer viewpoint was explored in private correspondence between Fox and Hawkes (the latter, pers. comm.) over fifty years ago (now in Hawkes’s archive in the Bodleian at Oxford). So successful has the shift in perspective been that the onus now lies on those who think otherwise to argue and to demonstrate their point of view. Let me here take the Megavian argument a little further with the pattern on two pieces: the repoussé bronze plaque from Llyn Cerrig Bach on Anglesey and the engraved bronze mirror from Old Warden in Bedfordshire (Fox 1947, no. 75; 1958, fig. 18, Pl. 23a; Spratling 1970; 1972, nos. 325 and 346; Jope 2000, Pls. 184–5a and 248a–f; Megaw and Megaw 2001, Ill. 338 (image reversed)).

Fox read the roundel on the plaque (Figure 10.5) as an asymmetric triskele with comma-shaped finials which the Megaws and Jope have since read as the heads of birds, Jope as puffins (appropriate for coastal Anglesey). Continuing to read the top finial as a head with eye, note a neck descending to a trunk curving off to the right. And then a leg curving down to a foot which is turned back on itself. With a leg at the front of the body the creature must be a quadruped. The leg's forward bowing and the foot's turning back on itself identify the quadruped as a horse on the move, the favoured beast on contemporary gold coinage in southeastern Britain. The pointed motifs can be matched on early Corieltauvian staters (Figure 10.6; Allen 1961, Pl. IX (British KA–B); May 1994, Pl. 1.8–14; Jope 2000, Pl. 319j). Like Chinese ideograms the commas change visual meaning according to context, giving us alternately a head, a hoof and part of the trunk, perhaps the hindquarters. Figure 10.6a shows a coin where the head has been transformed into a triskele, favoured motif on the top of contemporary linchpins (Spratling 1973, Pl. XXII.4). Equine imagery also accounts for the hoof and fetlock form of these linchpins' lower terminals (Spratling 1972, 58).

The Old Warden Mirror has received a bad press in general on the grounds that it does not look good pattern compared to other mirrors (cf. Leeds 1933, 36; Sandars 1968, 268 (= 1995, 415)). This has been compounded by a poor estimation of the mirror's engraving (Lowery, Savage and Wilkins 1976, 111–12, 113–14). Only Fox (1958, 94–5) and Stead (1996, 58) have been more charitable (cf. Spratling 1970, 11). Top right on the mirror (Figure 10.7a) we see a head with eye. From the head an almost continuous line descends across the upper part of the plate down to the left and then doubles back close to the edge up towards the head. This gives us a body from whose belly a leg descends to bifurcate into claws. Which gives us a bird, a bird shuffling forward an egg seen end on, rolling like a barrel as birds do and steadying itself with its tail spread out. Below, a pair of heads hatches out of an egg, the handle's upper oval element. Above them, pointing down, we see the head of a fledgling (Figure 10.7b) which contorts and stretches its body up the side of the plate, clenching a claw as it searches for purchase up towards the parent's head. The use of cross-over line to give twist to the body harks back to such early work as the third-century BC Wandsworth shield roundel (Figure 10.8).

We seem to be observing in this mirror a nest with bird, fledgling, hatchlings and egg high in the canopy of a tree whose branches are suggested by the twisting bands of apparent pattern (Figure 10.9a). The voids render by turn the bodies of the birds and the sky against which they and the branches are reserved. The eye for detail, shuffling the egg, for example, indicates a very studied observation of Nature and the climbing of trees to document what goes on in a nest. Another apparent nest scene fills the upper roundel of the Mayer mirror (Figure 10.9b). That these scenes show gestation, birth and early rearing seems appropriate for women for whom the mirrors were made. The depiction of domestic animals on other mirrors is a further allusion to the home domain (cats: Holcombe, Nijmegen; dog: Aston; cow: Ingleton (Jope 2000, Pls. 240a, 241a (inverted), 254a–b, 255 (inverted); 250c (inverted); 257b–c)).

At the same time that bronzesmiths were giving us this art of highly patterned images, others were evolving in the transformational art of coins a symbolic visual language in which chariots were reduced to wheels, horses to dumb bells and heads to locks of hair. Such transformations reach back to Torrs-Wandsworth style and to the 'Disney' aspect of La Tène B style (cf. Megaw 1970; Megaw and Megaw 2001).

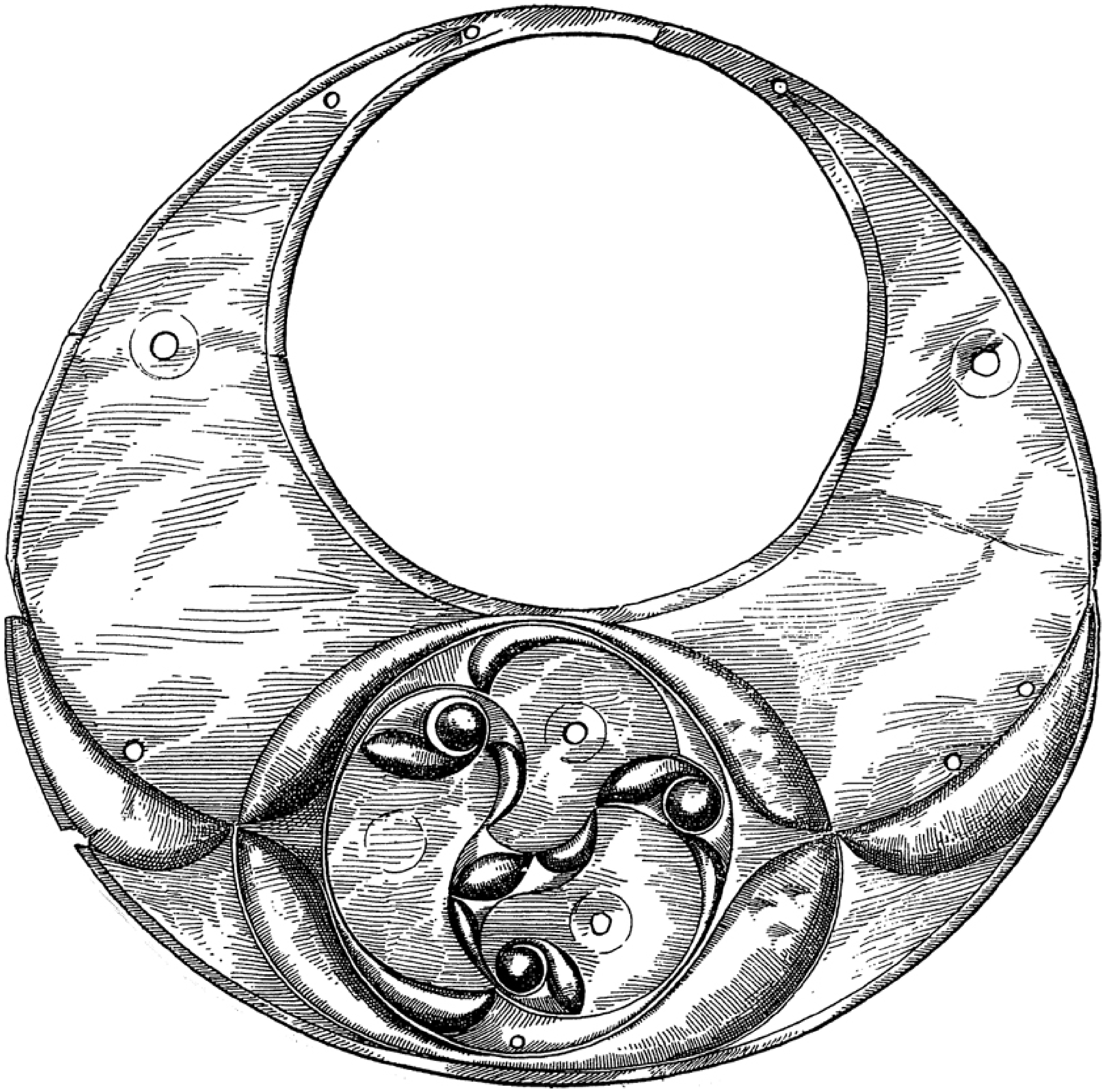


Figure 10.5. Plaque from Llyn Cerrig Bach (scale 2:3) (Fox 1958, Figure 18; reproduced by kind permission of National Museum of Wales)

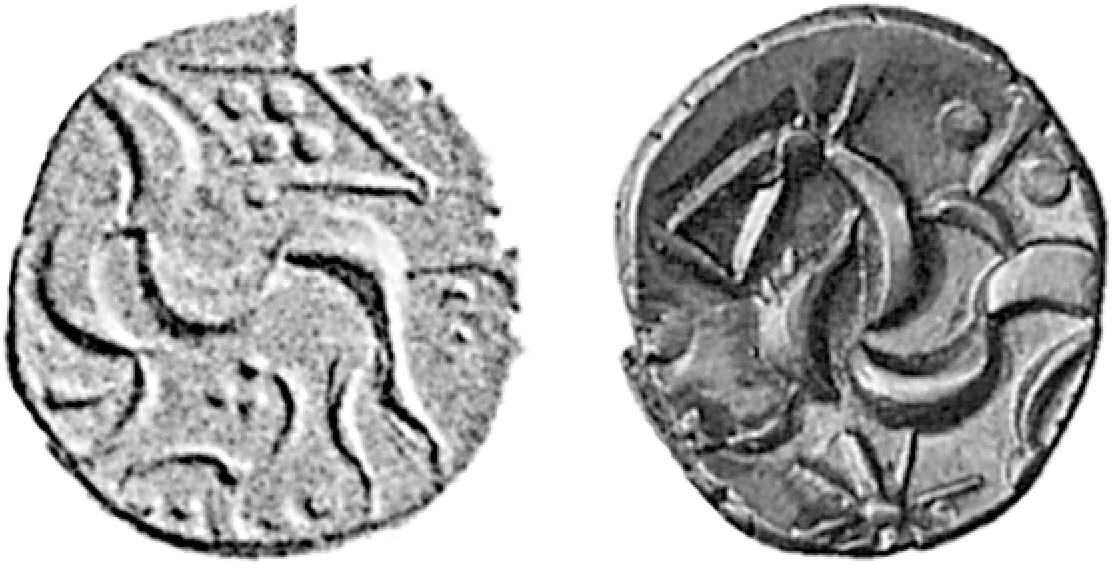
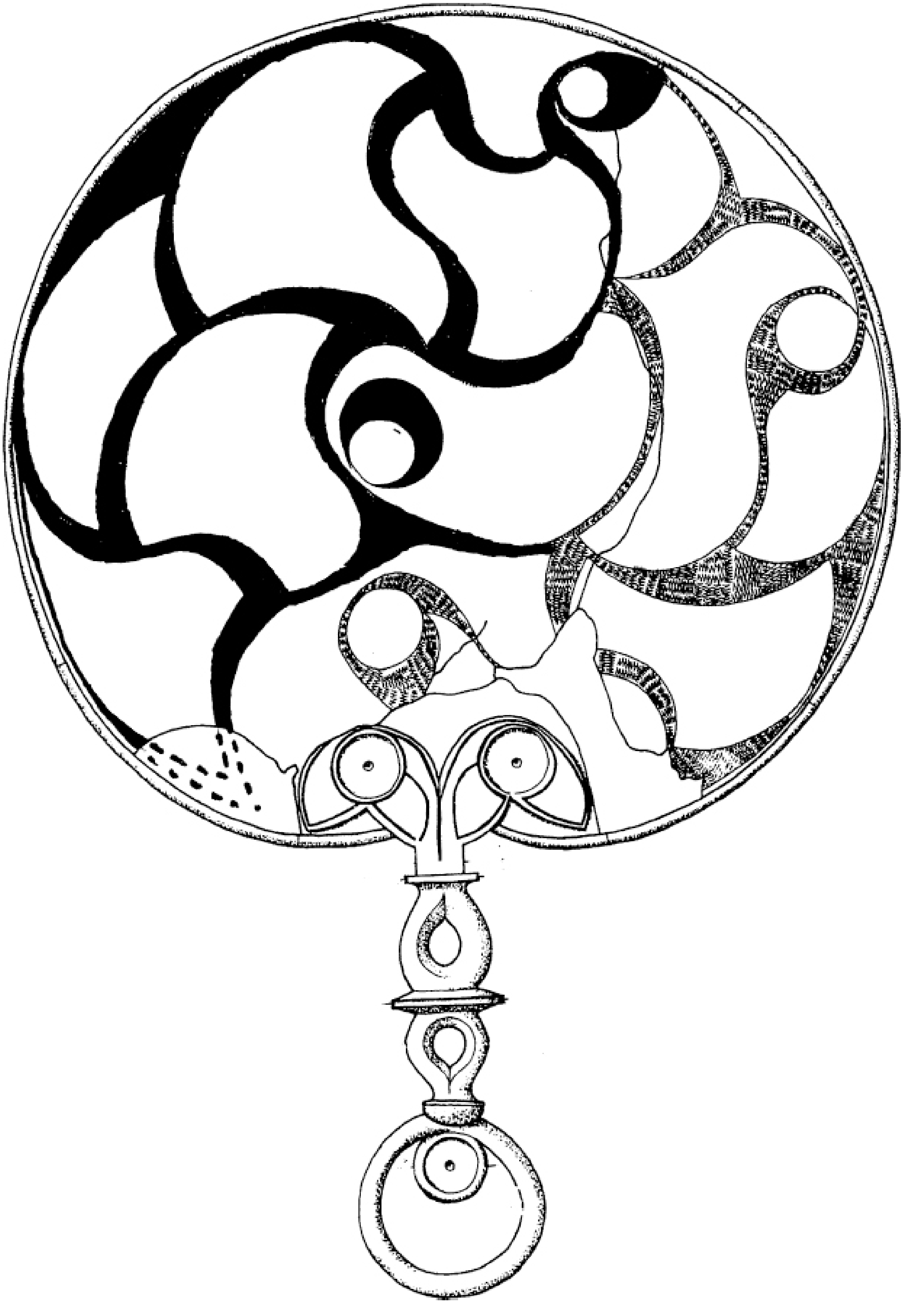


Figure 10.6a and b. Corieltauvian staters (images courtesy of the Celtic Coin Index, Institute of Archaeology, University of Oxford)

The destiny of British Art

In traditional practice every Iron Age metal artefact was a one-off product, individually fashioned. Only in the 1st century AD do we find the first signs of volume repetitive technology, in identical die alignment in coins (Dennis 2002) and in sheet bronze with repeated raised motifs (Jope 2000, Pls. 223–4). In the Kirkburn, East Riding chariot burial one of the four smaller terrets has eight pairs of lips around the ring, another has nine and the remaining two ten. The large terret has eleven (Stead 1991A, 47, fig. 40). The proportions of the third and fourth smaller terrets differ, 3:4 and 5:6, height to width. The proportions of the first two are 5:6 and 4:5, of the large terret 3:4. These proportions fall into a progression, 3:4 (twice), 4:5 and 5:6 (twice). The Kirkburn terrets are accurately executed design, entirely purposeful differentiation, and suggest that the British Iron Age metal artefact was accorded a respect similar to that of the modern work of art in which uniqueness is perceived to be an essential characteristic. In Switzerland it is possible that the name *Korisios* on a Late La Tène sword blade (Megaw and Megaw 2001, Ill. 240) may refer to the sword rather than, as is usually interpreted (ibid., 158), its owner. (Prefiguring perhaps Excalibur.)



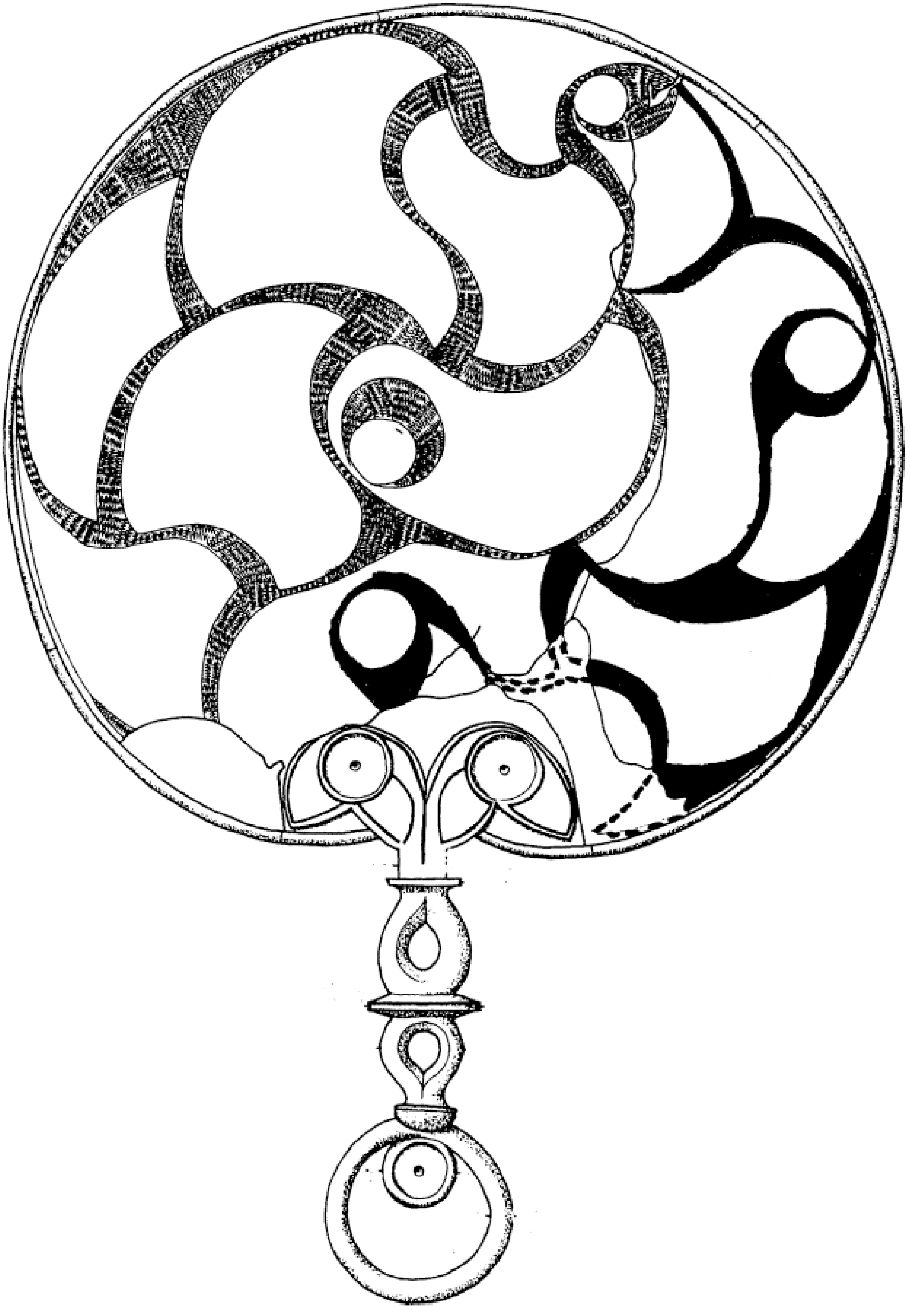


Figure 10.7. The Old Warden mirror:
a (top) adult bird with egg
b (above) fledgling (scale 1:3; drawn by the author)

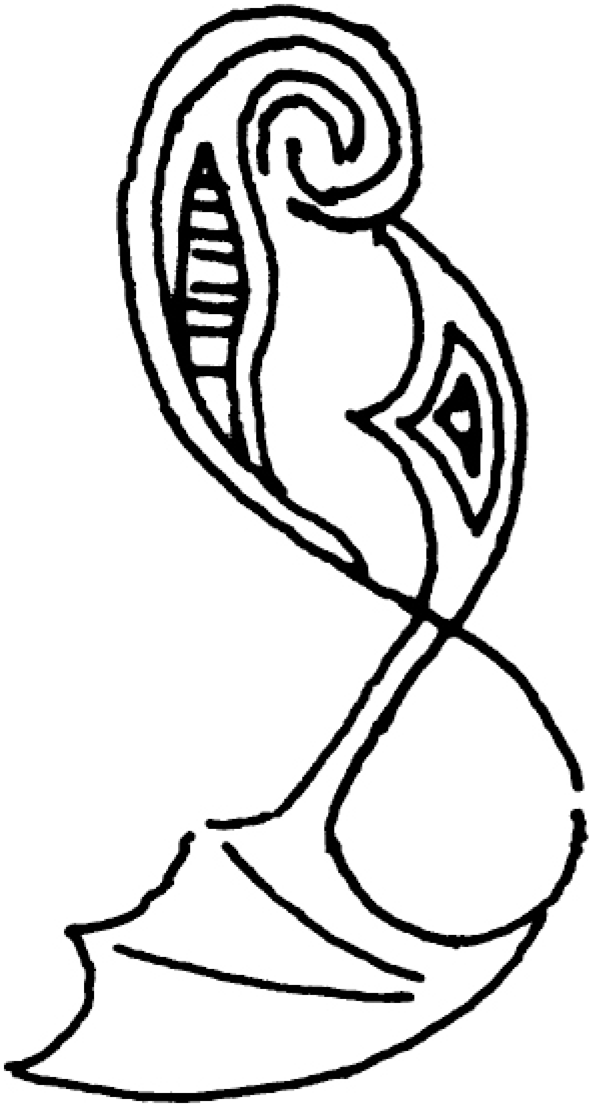
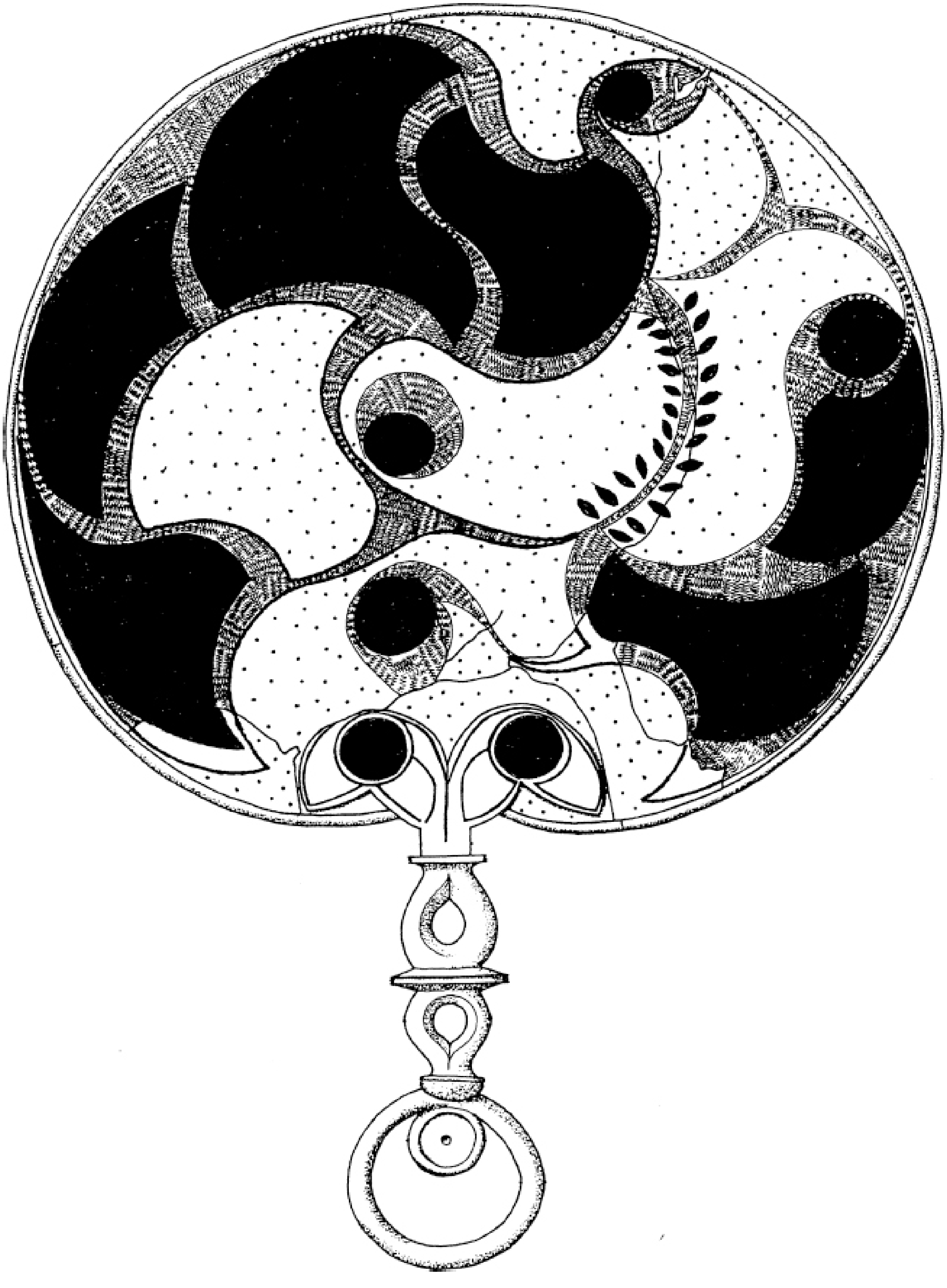


Figure 10.8. Detail of bird on the Wandsworth shield roundel (scale 2:1; drawn by the author)



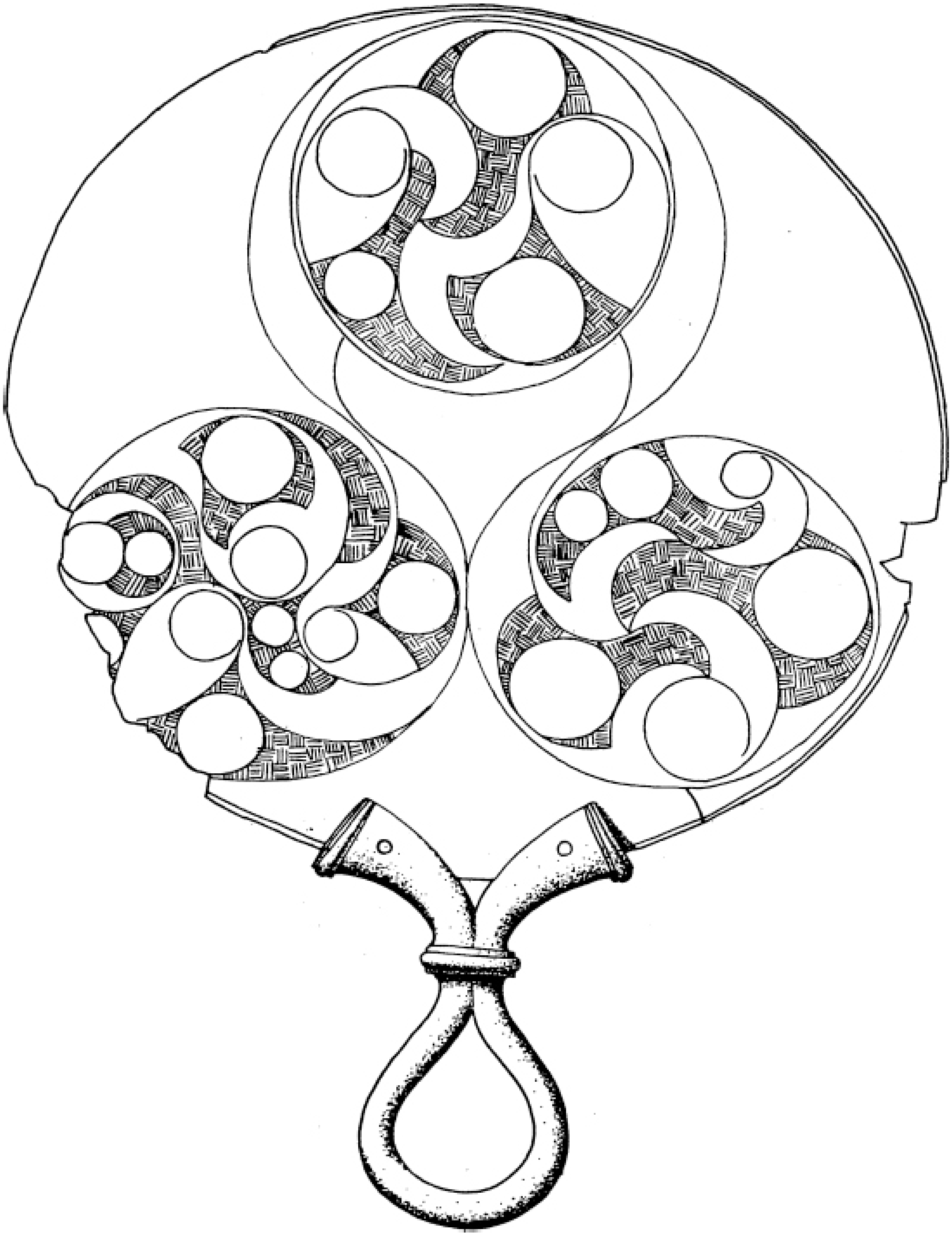


Figure 10.9. Nest scene on mirror, a (top) Old Warden (scale 1:3; drawn by the author), b. (above) Mayer (scale 1:3; drawn by the author)

We have, however, to guard against the contemporary notion that a work of art is a work of art forever, to be revered and preserved at all costs (the museum mentality). It is quite clear that in antiquity the most highly prized items could be broken up, cast into the crucible and made again into something else of whatever aesthetic value (cf. Reade 1986; Reece 1999). The act of deposition without recovery is also tantamount to destruction (if not for us, the recoverers). The great Snettisham E Torc could have been fashioned of metal which once formed part of something even more impressive. In Britain the most obvious example of the act of destruction of items we might term works of art is Hoard F at Snettisham (Stead 1991b). Scarcity was a further incentive to recycling. At Danebury bronze was so scarce that in ceramic phase 5, the later fifth century BC, 45.3 g (under two ounces) of workshop waste were gathered together into a little bag. Very few and very lightweight bronzes of this period have come down to us in Britain and apparently not one gram of either gold or silver. Yet within a century or so, Britain was home in its bronze shield fittings and other items to the most impressive set of works of art in temperate Europe (Megaws, this volume). The weight of the little Danebury bag of tiny fragments (Cunliffe and Poole 1991, figs. 7.6.1.129 and 7.70) would have sufficed for the manufacture of two specimens of the contemporary openwork roundel (19.6 g) from the site (ibid., fig. 7.5.1.94; Jope 2000, Pl. 31g; an unrecognised fragment of another similar roundel is Cunliffe and Poole 1991, fig 7.5.1.104).

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper has been to explore themes and to develop variations in the appreciation of British Art, and to distinguish between the attitudes that we bring to its study and those that its makers imbued it with. We have always to remember that it is the artefact or work of art itself which counts, which tells us through its very form and decoration of the choices and decisions made in its design and manufacture – choices and decisions which collectively inform us of the aesthetics of its maker and of the community in which he or she lived and worked. By studying the character of ancient artefacts we reach directly into the minds of their creators. No artefact need be a mute stone, for all we have to do is switch on, tune in and listen.

Note

Sarah Scott's very useful study (2006) of attitudes to metropolitan and provincial Greek and Roman art came to my attention too late for incorporation into my text.

Acknowledgements

There are so many from Colchester to Citrus Heights (CA) and from up north to down under who quietly and not so quietly capture and command my attention and who have contributed to this study, if only by leading me to conclude that such a point is inappropriate for inclusion here. Katharina Becker, Susan Carter, Pam Figgis, Jennifer Foster, Melanie Giles, Natasha Hutcheson, Catherine Johns, Sara Lunt, Ruth Megaw, Sara-Louise Peterson, Rachel Pope, Val Rigby, Lisa and Yvonne Rutherford, Sheelagh Stead and Judith Swaddling. And: Tim Champion, Paul Craddock, Jeff Davies, Philip de Jersey, Ian Freestone, Duncan Garrow, Chris Gosden, Adam Gwilt, Roy Hodson, Fraser Hunter, Jody Joy, Ian Kinnes, Vincent Megaw, Robert Pengelly, Mike Rowlands, Paul Sealey, Ian Stead, and the late Leo Biek and Christopher Hawkes. Last the librarians at the University of Cambridge and Catherine Hills for helping me gain access.

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11

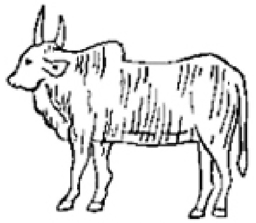
Comment I. Contextualising Iron Age art

Niall Sharples

Art?

I normally start my undergraduate lecture on Celtic Art with a slide derived from an article by Katsuyoshi Fukui on the colour and patterning of the cattle coats of the Bodi of southern Ethiopia (Figure 11.1; Fukui 1996). Within this society cattle are of fundamental importance: ‘they are not only the object of personal identification for each member of society, they are indispensable participants in many Bodi rituals’ (Fukui 1996, 322). The colour and patterning of the cattle coats are strikingly diverse and complex; a detailed investigation of the Bodi classification identified over 63 different named coat patterns. The coat characteristics are used as a system of classification that is crucial to the social structure of the society. Cattle colours and patterns are closely associated with personal and group identity and ‘all members of Bodi society are given a name, and at the same time assume a personal identification for life with a colour and pattern’ (Fukui 1996, 362). The sacrifice or drawing of blood from animals with particular coat colour/patterns is an essential element to most of the important rituals such as the installation of a chief, the decision to go to war, marriages and deaths, agricultural rituals and others. The diversity of the coat classification system was created and is currently maintained by careful control of the breeding process. The Bodi are well aware of how to manipulate the colour and pattern of calves by combing different cows and bulls and it was argued that they have an understanding of the hereditary basis of coat production that is as good as, if not better, than a genetic interpretation of pattern creation (of the early 1990’s).

The purpose of this lecture is to demonstrate two points: that the classification of colour and pattern are used to structure issues of identity and ritual behaviour, but more importantly that the non-functional manipulation of colour and pattern for social purposes is a feature of many media and need not be restricted to artefacts or to material that is even archaeologically recognisable. The ability to influence the pattern of a cow or bull may not be regarded as something that is obviously comparable to the decisions of specialist metalworkers, but we should remember that it requires the careful control of breeding and that this is the result of human action. The creation and definition of a wide range of domestic breeds of cattle, dogs and horses for instance does testify to people's desire to manufacture not only functionally, but aesthetically pleasing forms of animal. The aesthetic aspect of these breeding programmes is emphatically demonstrated by the representations of different breeds, such as horses, by some of the foremost British artists, such as Stubbs.



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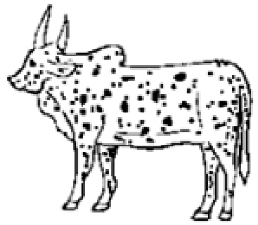

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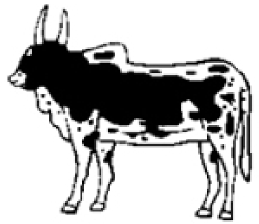

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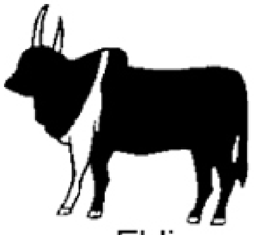

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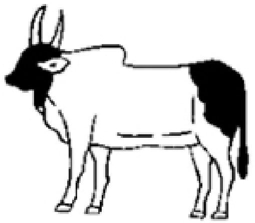

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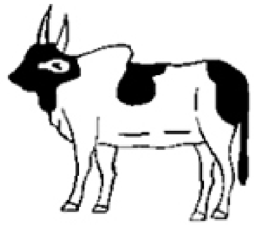

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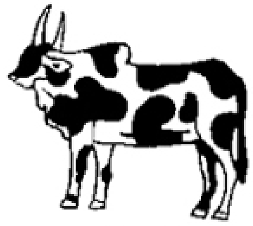

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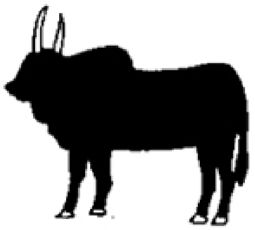

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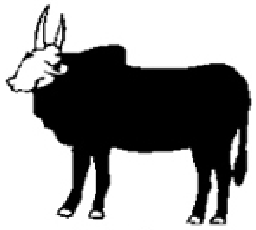

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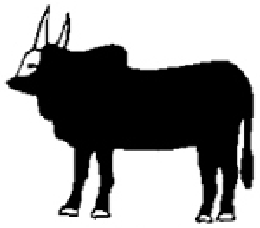

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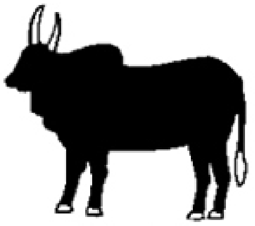

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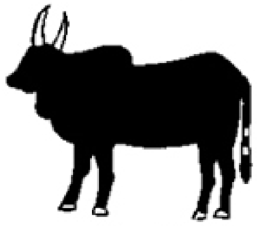

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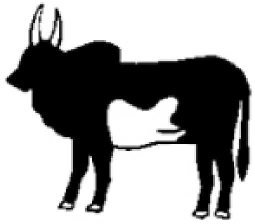

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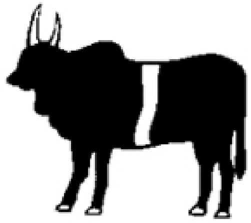

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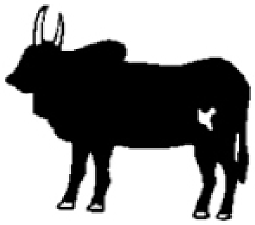

Bholighaasi

V

Figure 11.1. A *classification system for Bodi cows (after Fukui 1996, fig. 12.9)*

This highlights the problem of what we conventionally deal with as art objects in the archaeological record. They are quite often very limited and restricted groups of materials which have been abstracted from a much wider context of artistic objects. This is clearly demonstrated by the database of Celtic Art set up by Garrow. If we skip over the issue of Celtic, which has been much debated, then constraints of what is or is not art is a problematic issue. Garrow, though acknowledging the problems surrounding these terms, sidesteps the issue by stating that the database will restrict itself exclusively to metalwork, and will absorb objects previously discussed and catalogued by others as examples of Celtic art, with the proviso that it excludes the large datasets of coins, brooches and pins.

Both Megaw and Megaw and Spratling address the issue of the definition of art. Megaw and Megaw quote their early definition that art ‘encompasses elements of decoration beyond those necessary for functional utility’ and that ‘these elements represent a form of symbolic visual communication which is only partially accessible to us’ (Megaw and Megaw 2001, 19). Spratling suggests that the conventional canon ‘encompasses ornament or pattern and animal/human/supernatural images in metal and other media’ (Spratling this volume 188). Both of these definitions clearly open up the debate to encompass objects that would not be included in Garrow’s database, and indeed Megaw refers to the art of the ceramic vessel from St Pol de Leon and Spratling refers to the possibility of the ramparts of Maiden Castle being considered a statement of artistic expression: an idea which I would whole heartedly support. However, the papers by both of these authors are almost totally focussed on metalwork.

I think there is much to be learned by taking a more inclusive approach to the term art, and in the British Iron Age it is arguable that most of the art objects that conform to Megaw’s limited definition are in media such as ceramic or bone/antler. Ceramics are one of contemporary art’s most important mediums and Grayson Perry, the winner of the Turner Prize in 2003, and one of contemporary art’s most visible characters, is famous for his work as a potter.

The nature of creation and the social significance of materials

Restricting the focus of studies of Celtic Art to metals can be problematic in that it assumes that people in the Iron Age regarded metals as a homogeneous group of materials that were categorically different from other materials; but is this the case? It should be emphasised that gold, copper alloys and iron were quite different in origin, in transformation and appearance. Gold in particular differs from other metals in being found as gold. It is normally cold worked by hammering and is too soft to have any practical function. Iron and copper derive from ores which require smelting at high temperatures, but iron differs from copper in that, in prehistory, it is not molten and never cast, and can only be worked by hammering. Copper in contrast is normally cast, though hammering is also used to produce copper sheet for vessels such as cauldrons and scabbards. It is possible that some ceramics were thought to be quite closely connected to copper alloys. They were after all formed in high temperatures and in the Early Iron Age red coloured pottery seemed to have been deliberately created to resemble copper alloy vessels. The magical and transformative nature of the production of copper alloy metals is also closely comparable to the transformative processes that are involved in the production of glass, and this is very clearly demonstrated by the complex relationship between glass, enamel, bronze and zinc in the latter stages of the Iron Age (see Davis and Gwilt this volume).

One of the principal issues that surround the discussion of art in the recent past is the role of the artist in the creation of that art. Today the force behind the art object is clearly attributed to an artist who is the primary agent in its creation. In the past and in other contemporary societies the presence of a single artist is clearly a much more problematic issue. Many of the Renaissance painters of Italy were the leaders of large workshops of talented yet subordinate painters, and their physical contribution to any individual painting may have been minimal. It seems unlikely that the circumstances of Renaissance Italy are relevant to Iron Age Britain, but the presence of craft specialists in different aspects of the creation of an object is important to our understanding of complex objects, such as the mirrors discussed by Jody Joy in this volume. The technology behind the casting of the handles, the creation of the plate, the design of the pattern, the engraving of the pattern and the infilling of the pattern with cross hatching all require varying degrees of skill but are quite separate and distinct activities. Either they required the participation of different individuals or the craftsman possessed a broad range of complex knowledge. Similar problems were raised by a discussion of the complex technologies of the torcs in the Snettisham hoard during the seminar.

These issues are even more problematic when one considers the objects in the Seven Sisters Hoard discussed by Davis and Gwilt in this volume. These were made from very different alloys that include copper, brass and bronze, they are decorated with a variety of techniques and are inlaid with either glass or enamel. The different technologies are associated with significantly different art styles, curvilinear, geometric and Roman, and open up the issue of who was creating what for whom. Could the first two categories of indigenous object be produced in the same workshop for different clienteles or do they indicate different producers working for the same clientele?

The complex relationships surrounding the creation of an object were emphasised in the initial chapters of Alfred Gell's book on Art and Agency (Gell 1998), and to my mind these issues are clarified by his discussion (and diagram) of the Art Nexus. This emphasised that the agency behind the creation of any object may derive from the craftsmen/women who produced it, the nature and physical constraints of the object itself, the prototype on which the object is based/represents and the audience for whom the object is created. It is seldom the case that a single 'agent' can be seen to be completely responsible for the form of any art object, and I doubt if even contemporary artists would assume total responsibility for their art. It is better to assume that all of these agents are implicated in the form of the final object and the problem therefore becomes how one identifies the role each aspect of agency takes. Thus an appreciation of the artistry of a mirror would consider the skill with which the technicians had produced the objects and engraved the design, but they would also need to acknowledge that the bronze could only be modified by certain specific processes such as casting and engraving, and that to function as a mirror it had to look like other mirrors and finally that the information communicated by the design was in a form understandable to the audience who were going to use the mirror.

The distinction between form and decoration

The difference between form and decoration is of crucial significance and Garrow has highlighted the distinction between decorated and undecorated objects and how this varies from category to category; armlets are almost exclusively decorated, whereas daggers are seldom decorated. There is a tendency to focus on decoration in studies of Celtic Art and it is important to emphasise that form is as much an artistic expression as the appearance and complexity of decoration. For instance, when we consider ceramics, is the shape of a pot a reflection of its function as a vessel for cooking and presenting food, or for storage, or is it a social statement that communicates meaning? It certainly seems unlikely that this is simply a reflection of the function of these objects as this would surely result in a standardisation of functionally efficient forms and this is simply not visible in the archaeological record. Instead we see a range of forms whose shape enables them to fulfil certain simple functions but whose basic form appears to be a reflection of a cultural aesthetic that changes from region to region and which evolves/changes through time. A clearly documented example of these changes is the ceramic sequence in Wessex in the Iron Age (Figure 11.2).

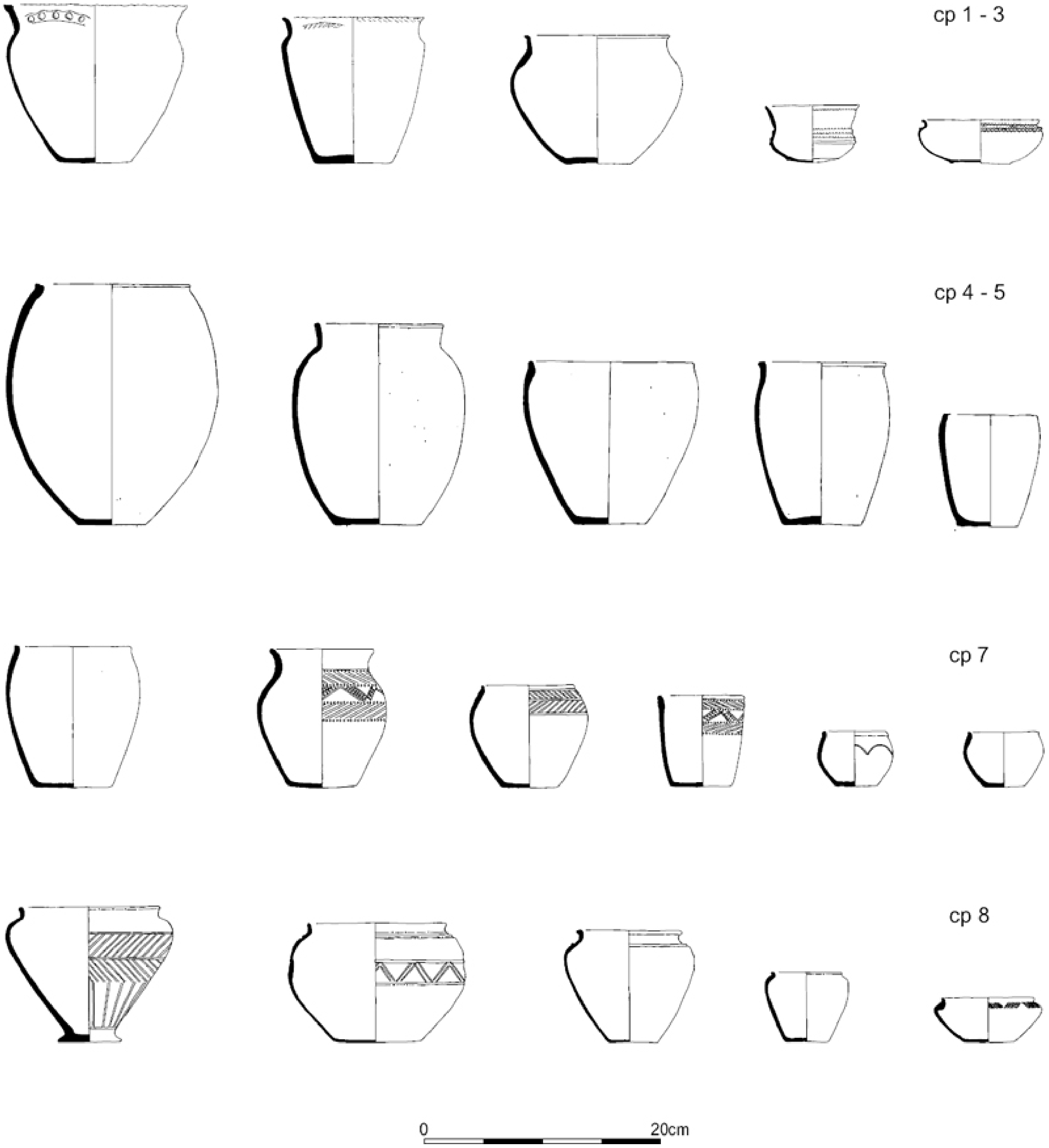

Figure 11.2. The Danebury ceramic sequence (after Brown in Cunliffe and Poole 1991)

Similarly the shape of many bone/antler tools should be considered an artistic expression rather than a reflection of functional requirements. Weaving combs (Figure 11.3) are one of the easiest objects to use as an illustration of this as they have been catalogued and examined on a national basis (Tuohy 1999) but other objects could be considered. Weaving combs are found throughout the British Isles and have various forms which are constrained by the nature of the raw material used; cattle metapodials, deer antler and, occasionally, whalebone. These constraints still enable the development of a limited range of quite distinctive forms that clearly indicate a social aesthetic rather than a particularly efficient form.

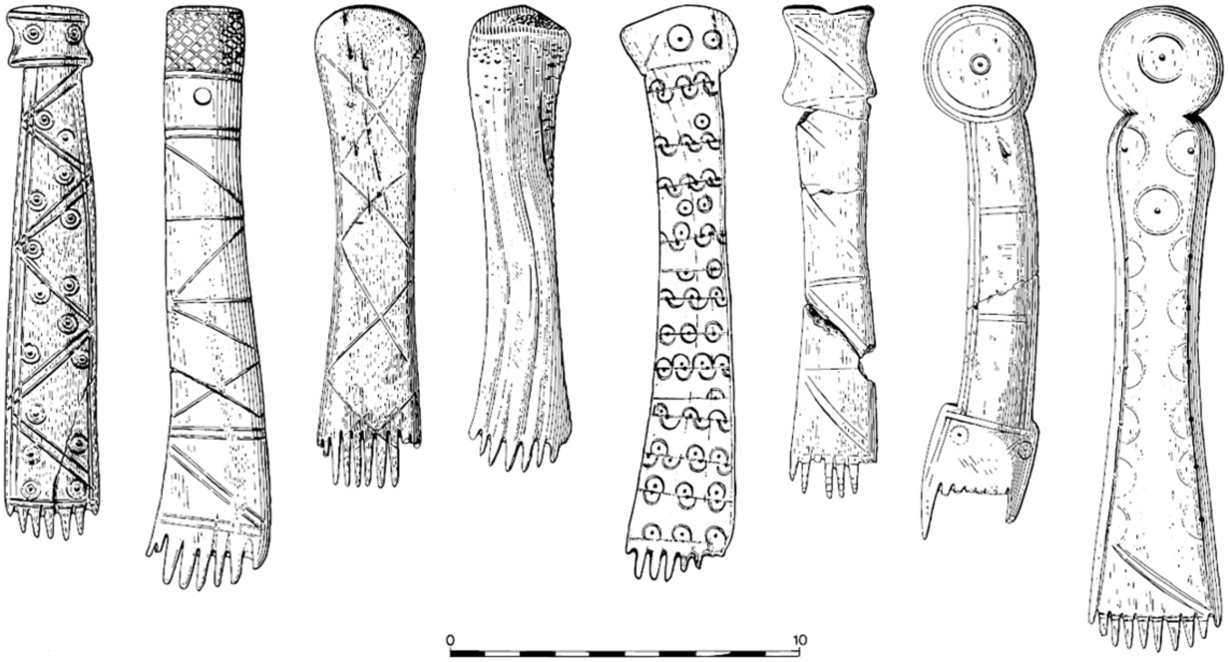

Figure 11.3. A *selection of 'weaving' combs from Meare, Somerset (source: Somerset Levels Project – Coles 1987)*

Decoration has been the subject of detailed consideration but much of this has been concerned with identifying chronological change and cultural identity rather than social significance. Analysis frequently breaks down into the search for parallels of small scale traits which Megaw rightly criticises as a pointless exercise when there is no theoretical basis for interpreting these similarities; or for assembling them into typological sequences that presume a chronological development that can not be assessed. A much more interesting development has been the search for symbolic or representational meaning in the use of certain motifs. This activity is represented in this volume by Spratling's search for horse imagery in the triskele pattern of the Llyn Cerrig Bach plaque, and the avian imagery of the Old Warden mirror, and it is something that has characterised several papers by the Megaws. This approach can be applied to the designs present in other media, and Campbell (1991), following the work of Hodder, has explored the representational significance of pottery decoration in Atlantic Scotland.

In a recent overview of the use of decoration on pottery throughout British prehistory Woodward (2002) has highlighted a characteristic of later prehistoric pottery which is worth discussing. A distinctive feature of the later Bronze Age is the use of finger nail and finger tip decoration. This was present in earlier phases but became proportionally more important in the Middle Bronze Age and is almost the only decorative trait known in the Late Bronze Age. It is associated with large storage vessels and it continues to be common on these vessels in the Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age transitional period, although, in this time there was also elaborate incised and grooved decoration on fine ware bowls. This finger nail decoration is important because it is 'formed by the extremities of the human body (and) may have served to emphasise the totally domestic and humanised nature of the new social order' (Woodward 2002, 117). I would see it as marking the presence of the human body and the individual in a period when this is otherwise difficult to identify in the archaeological record; by the Middle Iron Age even this basic expression of humanity has been excised and decoration is grooved, stamped or incised.

A relationship between ceramics and metalwork

The 'Technologies of Enchantment' database has highlighted two aspects of the distribution which though already well recognised are now more precisely delineated;

- A chronological pattern can be seen in the relatively small quantities of decorative metalwork found in the first three hundred years of the Iron Age, most of the objects featured in this volume were probably made and deposited in the first centuries BC/AD,
- A spatial pattern is visible in the restricted distribution of decorated metalwork which focus on certain areas within southern and eastern England.

The significance of these patterns can be enhanced if we compare them to the presence of elaborately decorated ceramics.

One of the interesting features of the evidence from the Arras burials of Yorkshire is that the elaborate decoration of objects, such as the Kirkburn sword, is associated with ceramic vessels which have been crudely made, have little formal variety and are completely undecorated (Stead 1991). The low but consistent presence of elaborate metalwork throughout northern England and lowland Scotland generally coincides with a pottery tradition that is best described as crudely functional or non-existent. This is also true of the north of Ireland where the rich metalwork tradition occurs within an apparently aceramic society. The densest concentration of decorative metalwork in Britain occurs in East Anglia and this area is again noted for having ceramic traditions that are extremely limited and largely undecorated (Percival 1999).

These patterns contrast with those visible in the islands of Atlantic Scotland. In the two hundred years either side of 0 BC/AD this area has some of the most elaborately decorated and well made pottery in Britain (Lane 1990) and yet the use of elaborately decorated metalwork is minimal, despite the existence of important indigenous traditions of metalwork production in the eastern counties of Scotland (these issues are discussed more fully in Sharples 2003). Similarly the most elaborately decorated pottery in southern England is found in the south west (Glastonbury Wares), and this is an area which does not have a significant concentration of decorated metalwork prior to the Roman conquest.

The chronological complexity of these relationships is important and can be considered by an examination of the material from Wessex, where the importance of decorated pottery can be charted through the Iron Age. In the Early Iron Age, when metalwork of any type is almost completely absent, decorated pottery is common, particularly on small bowls that appear to have been used for serving food. At the beginning of the Middle Iron Age, decoration is very unusual and this coincides with a general decline in the presence of portable material culture of any form. The development of a new range of ceramic forms, notably saucepan pots, coincides with the reappearance of decoration. These pots are very distinctive (in form) and are found across a large area of southern England (the saucepan pot continuum; Cunliffe 1991); they represent a standardised ware which functionally appears to be best suited for cooking, but which must also have acted as a vessel for serving foods. The appearance of these pots coincides with the increasing importance of material culture and decorated metalwork, though this largely comprises small brooches and basically functional tools. The more elaborate metalwork, mostly horse gear, comes into the area in the first century BC. The introduction of this material is soon followed by the introduction of new wheel turned pottery types. These vessels have more complex forms which can be broken down into distinctive types used for drinking, serving food, cooking, transportation and storage. They also have varied surface treatments, e.g. burnishing and scoring, etc., and a more diverse colour range which suggests that although visual appearance is important, less emphasis is placed on incised designs.

It seems therefore that even in an area where both decorated pottery and elaborate metalwork are present, the chronological pattern shows that they are actually occurring at quite different times. Periods exist when decoration is almost totally absent in all media (except the creation of hillforts), other periods when pottery is the principal format for decoration and other periods when elaborately decorated metalwork is of considerable importance.

Contexts of signification

These patterns highlight the role decoration serves in society. If one assumes that decoration is meaningful and conveys information in a socially coherent format then the variation in the medium used becomes an important indication of the arenas in which communication is becoming increasingly complicated and socially important. I would argue that the complementary relationship of pottery decoration and decorative metalwork reflects their use in different social arenas for audiences that are being influenced in quite different ways and for quite different purposes.

Iron Age pottery is used to establish relationships between people through the medium of cooking and consuming food. These relationships would often be within families, but they could also be between different family groups. In the first context decoration might be concerned within defining gender and age divisions, whereas in the second context, form and decoration could represent a medium for negotiating and considering broader identities. These would include the role and status of families living inside a single settlement, such as a large hillfort, or between families living in adjacent small settlements.

Decorative metalwork is likely to be operating in a different cultural milieu. As Garrow has demonstrated, the database of decorative metalwork is overwhelmingly dominated by horse gear, the largest subsidiary categories are objects of personal adornment and weapons. These objects are clearly not being used in the same situations as pottery and arguably none of these objects should be regarded as having a straightforward function.

The horse gear is best interpreted on the basis of the Yorkshire burials and is closely associated with the deposition of chariots in the graves of high status individuals. Giles considers these ‘carts’ in quite a detailed manner but I am not totally convinced by her interpretation that these objects operate at the mundane level of intertribal warfare or exchange trips or that they are as widely available as Gosden and Hill argue. The cart reconstructed from the Wetwang burial is basically a light weight gig that would be no use for carrying substantial quantities of material over long distances and nor, given its exceptionally poor turning circle, would it have a role on the battlefield. It seems better interpreted as a specialised vehicle which is only suitable for short ceremonial journeys possibly journeys of religious significance, such as the trip to the burial ground. It may also be significant that cart fittings are frequently present in special deposits and it seems likely that they have been circulated as objects rather than components of wooden vehicles.

Similarly the elaborately decorated sword scabbards seem to be unlikely participants in violent combat, and again their presence would be more suitable in ceremonial and religious events. It is after all clear that the primary weapon of combat in Yorkshire was the spear and in the one cemetery where swords are relatively common they are undecorated functional objects (Stead 1991). Finally the items of personal adornment that dominate our understanding of the southern British Iron Age are the torcs of East Anglia. The limited numbers (apart from Snettisham) and restricted distribution of the British torques clearly identifies them as special objects, and the weight of some of the torcs would make them very difficult to wear. It has been suggested by Furger-Gunti (quoted in

Fitzpatrick 2005, 159) that they were used to decorate the wooden statues of the gods rather than to be worn by real people.

I would argue then that most of the decorative metalwork covered by the database was used in very specific religious contexts. They were meant to dazzle and enchant the audience but this was in a close intimate context, possibly between a restricted group of the elite who were privileged to be able to handle the objects or certainly to get close to the person who was handling them. The small scale and intricate nature of the decoration only makes sense if it was operating at this intimate level as it simply would not be visible from any distance (see also Spratling this volume). Perhaps the context of use created a division between those involved at the intimate level who could study the decoration and those kept away who were only able to appreciate the dazzling flashes of light that reflected off metalwork and the distinctive colours that were not normally present in their daily lives. Furthermore, the widespread distribution of these objects suggests they were exchanged between elites and that these gift exchanges operated at a religious level which legitimated the elites' role and provided the alliances and practical support that were required to maintain their position.

Deposition and death

One of the problems we have in making a convincing interpretation of the elaborate metalwork is the representative nature of the archaeological record. Are the distributions represented by Garrow a reflection of the currency of these objects in Iron Age Britain or do they represent isolated periods and regions where it was deemed appropriate to deposit material in contexts where they would survive to be recovered by archaeologists? In other words would we expect the contemporary elite of southern Britain to be wearing swords similar to those found in the Kirkburn burial? This is certainly the view of some archaeologists working on the British material and I would argue these views reflect the self critical nature of the discipline; we often assume that we know very little about the past and that much of the evidence for past societies is in materials that we can not recover; because they are organic and completely decayed or because they have been systematically destroyed or deliberately hidden in places that we can never explore. This negative view is undermined by the fact that archaeology undertaken in well explored areas such as Wessex seldom makes radically new discoveries that totally undermine our understanding of the Iron Age.

The idea that the burial record in Yorkshire simply makes visible what is happening throughout Britain is a misunderstanding of the significance of the archaeology, and the role of material culture. This is not a representation of the past but is the active constitution of social relationships in the past. An elaborately decorated sword did not simply represent the status of the individual who wore it; it was through ownership of the sword that the individual achieved his/her status in that society. The acquisition of the sword demonstrated the individual's membership of the elite and would be the result of a gift exchange that created relationships that would support him/her if their position was challenged. Likewise the burial of an individual with a series of objects of high value was not simply an indication of the status of that individual, but it was a ceremony carried out by a group of living individuals who were establishing their own position by effectively disposing of a considerable amount of wealth. All these objects and activities represented in the archaeological record are not accidental or epiphenomenal but constitute the past, and to expect the answer to be concealed from us is a misunderstanding of the archaeological record.

Conclusion

I have tried in this discussion to bring out some of the issues that arose during the Oxford seminar but have also got involved in some personal hobbyhorses that I have been exploring over the last few years. It is clear that the subject of Celtic Art is intriguing and important; but it is also difficult, not just because of the complex nature of the material to be studied, but because it is often abstracted from the social context of the societies in which it exists. To move the debate forward we need to reintegrate art and archaeology with people.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Duncan, Chris and J. D. for inviting me to the conference, which I found very enjoyable, and for encouraging me to make these comments, even though they do not necessarily agree with them. J. D. Hill gave particularly helpful advice on the nature of Late Iron Age ceramics and Ian Dennis and Morwena Perrott created the illustrations. Finally Mary Davis provided many helpful and encouraging comments throughout the creation of this paper.

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12

Comment II. The unmaking of Iron Age identities: art after the Roman conquest

David Mattingly

Defining Celtic Art and the academic context

The *New Approaches to Celtic Art workshop* was a landmark event – as the papers in this volume amply testify. Perhaps one of the most interesting aspects of the meeting was the degree of engagement of a succession of speakers with the new incarnation of Celtic art in the Roman period in Britain. It is to the papers that dealt with the Roman interlude that I shall address my main concluding comments, since Niall Sharples and others in the volume are far better placed to discuss the arguments more specifically relating to the earlier Iron Age phases. However, it was striking that several prominent Romanists attended the workshop and that much discussion focused on the Iron Age to Roman transition. Now more than ever it seems, the theoretical and thematic interests of Iron Age and Roman specialists are converging, with a strong focus on issues of personal identity (Eckardt 2005; Hill 2001; Gardner 2007; Hunter 2007; James 1999; 2001; Jundi and Hill 1998; Mattingly 2004).

Problems remain in working across this divide, not least in the joining of history with mythtory – a point perfectly exemplified by the fictional (and rather schizophrenic) world of Manda Scott's Boudica trilogy (Scott 2003, 2004, 2005). Her books are of interest, not least because of the centrality given to metalworking and artworks in the British societies she depicts. This is a richly imagined vision of a mystical Britain – the Iron Age as some might like to have found it – but how true to life was this world of idealised warriors and dreamers? Nevertheless, despite its heavy reliance on new age spirituality and magical realism, the novels highlight something fundamental about the experience of Britain falling under Roman domination – just how much there was at stake culturally.

Archaeology supplies an amazing body of data for us to build an understanding of this period of cultural transition, but to maximise its potential we need to get away from traditional dichotomies. As Richard Hingley and Chris Unwin have demonstrated in their careful retelling of the story of Boudica, it was never as simple as ‘Britons’ against ‘Romans’, militarily or culturally (2005, 41–107). Indeed, the material culture of Britain under Roman rule provides a vivid example of the unmaking of pre-existing cultures in the face of imperial military and cultural power and the construction of new and highly varied identities as a result. It was not all one-way traffic of course, as Unwin’s clever reconstruction drawing of Boudica in her chariot conveys by equipping her with a Roman sword and her driver with a Roman trophy helmet (Hingley and Unwin 2005, 219). Similarly, Creighton’s work on the client kings of Rome and their coinages and urban designs in the early first century AD has challenged our common perceptions about the reception of Roman ideas and material culture pre-Conquest (2000; 2006; Manley and Rudkin 2005 provide evidence of something similar at Fishbourne). We need to remind ourselves that the chief opponents of Rome during the Conquest phase had earlier been the chief allies and cultural innovators in British society. In consequence, AD 43 is no longer quite the political and cultural turning point it was once held to be, nor British Iron Age culture quite the pristine entity it is sometimes imagined to have been at that date. Insular British art had already become exposed to much greater levels of Continental influence and competition by the advance of Rome in Gaul.

Academic studies of the body of material conveniently, but problematically, classed as ‘Celtic Art’ have tended to emphasise issues of typology and style more than social context and function (Jope 2000; Megaw and Megaw 2005). One of the strengths of the papers in this book concerns the opening up of a series of questions and themes focused more on social, contextual and biographical approaches to the artefacts. The creation of a systematic database of relevant material, with the potential to interrogate and map the underlying patterns of occurrences and particularly depositions is a welcome outcome. As Garrow’s chapter shows very clearly, the pattern of survival is far from random and changed over time in relation to broad political shifts, especially following the Roman invasion of AD 43.

Yet, this database, as Garrow acknowledges, is flawed at the outset in terms of what is included and what excluded. The first problem concerns the relationship between what survived and what once existed – a point brilliantly illustrated by Gosden and Hill in their introduction through their estimates of the missing chariot and horse gear from the time of Caesar's conquest or the drastic under-representation of swords from such a martial society. A second problem relates to scholarly selection and boundary setting. For a variety of reasons coins, brooches and pins are not included in the project database, though the numbers of artefacts in these classes could greatly have swelled the 2,600 objects available to the study. The Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) has the potential to deliver an even greater volume of material for analysis over the next years – perhaps filling in some of the blanks on the current distribution maps (Worrell 2007). The danger of swamping the more unique creations with multiple examples of routine craft production can be readily acknowledged, of course, and there are plenty of precedents for excluding this material. However, it is precisely through the exclusion of, say, Romano-British brooch types that the post-conquest continuities of Celtic art have been blurred in many previous studies. As the overlays of PAS Iron Age brooch finds or the Iron Age coin distribution on the project's total GIS distribution of artworks show (Garrow, this volume, Figures 2.6a, 2.6b), there may be important linkages between the various classes of material, while, by the same token, previously imposed scholarly demarcations concerning what is art are in general unhelpful to analysis. Several papers (especially Hunter and Eckardt) bring out the significance of brooch distributions in the Romano-British period in understanding the new incarnation of Celtic artistic traditions. I very much hope that one of the outcomes of the project will be further engagement with the problem of producing a geo-referenced database of brooch types, for comparison (and contrast) with other categories of artwork.

Looking back at the Iron Age from the Roman perspective through the other end of the telescope presents its own optical difficulties. Again, there has been a tendency to divorce the two cultural spheres through unhelpful models like Romanisation or by over-generalising the extent of acceptance of new, improved Roman culture over old, defeated and obsolete British visual language. Roman provincial art is increasingly seen to have been both more complex and more varied (Scott and Webster 2003). It is now more generally recognised that far from being a homogenous cultural experience, the forging of 'Roman' identities was regionally and socially heterodox, with significant continuities with the pre-Roman period (Mattingly 2004).

Dating art

A second goal of the project, to revisit the question of the dating of many classic pieces, is also laudable and much needed. We need to understand more clearly whether artefacts had short use-lifes or alternatively were subject to long-term curation in the Iron Age societies of the British Isles. The surviving corpus is by no means a representative sample – indeed it is heavily compromised by the relative lack of formality in late Iron Age burial rites in much of Britain, by the inherent bias towards a few spectacular hoards and deposits, and above all by the fate inflicted on the vast majority of the 'artworks' in the circumstances of Roman conquest and occupation. Yet, what emerges really strongly from Garrow's analysis of the database or the studies of Hunter, Eckardt and Davis and Gwilt is the numerical importance of Celtic artworks in the Roman period – not just in terms of curation and final deposition, but also in terms of continued production. Here again, the traditional limits set on what constitutes Celtic art have tended to down-play the significance of the continuities, and focused attention on an assumed sudden end to production, rather than on an even more interesting set of transformations and redirections of British creative energies. However, it strikes me that one of the difficult questions that needs to be asked of the evidence by both Roman and Iron Age specialists concerns the extent to which the later stages of 'Celtic art' reveal more about the nature of Roman imperialism than about Iron Age societies.

Active art and imperial discourse

The final goal of the project, and in many ways the most interesting, is to examine what the objects were for, how they functioned both actively and passively. For instance, the extent to which artefacts were created to impress people or to placate divine forces in the pre-Roman Iron Age has been much discussed. What is striking from the new analyses of material from Snettisham and elsewhere is the extent to which we are dealing with an ‘art of deception’ in the use of gold plate and silver and gold enrichment of copper alloy bases, or of hollow tubular gold torcs making visual statements far in excess of their actual metallic content. It is surely fair to conclude from such evidence that the prime intended audience for some elements of Celtic art production was mortal rather than divine, providing we accept that people believed in the omniscience of the gods (that is, in their ability to see through such human deceptions). By contrast, people can be obliged to keep a certain distance, to refrain from handling visually impressive adornments. Indeed the Snettisham evidence points increasingly to the importance of the *unmaking* of artworks before deposition. If the Snettisham deposits were of a sacred nature, then in taking valuable goods out of human circulation and as part of that process substantially disassembling them, we have the paradoxical situation that some of our prime examples of Celtic art are preserved because they were subjected to symbolic acts of destruction.

These were long-term tendencies in British society, not a sudden change at the Conquest. However, it also appears that the unmaking of Celtic art was exacerbated by the circumstances of conquest and subjugation of many of the British peoples by Rome. A strong correlation is illustrated by Garrow between successive phases of archaeological deposition and the progress of Roman conquest (his Figures 2.10–2.11). The precise meaning of these distributions is not straightforward. The deposition of hoards in dryland sites, from which the material could potentially have been recovered at later date, fits with the idea of crisis and danger occasioned by Roman military campaigns, though the number of archaeological discoveries of high prestige items deposited in emergency hoards is perhaps not as high as we might expect. The Roman conquest seems like an emphatic full stop as regards the production of large-scale bronze-, silver- and gold-works. The argument from silence here is that a vast number of prestige pieces of Celtic art were seized as booty at the time of the Roman conquest. The first outcome of the forced union of British and Roman societies was not so much a cultural melting pot as a literal one into which the material wealth of British society was poured in large quantities.

Craft production of minor pieces in the British tradition clearly continued, and, to judge from the significant level of finds at Roman military sites, this was in part in the service of new markets and consumers (a key conclusion of Hunter's excellent paper). The tendency of the military community to incorporate elements of local craftwork in defining military identity parallels, in the sphere of material culture, the army practice of adopting local gods. In the specific context of colonial discourse, such moves were not about acknowledging the value of local culture, more generally they were about dominant possession of local goods, traditions and material culture (on the unequal discourse of religious syncretism, see Webster 1995; 1997). There are potentially profound social consequences for the subjugated when they lose sole ownership of gods and material symbols.

There were other reasons that served to discourage native Britons from continuing pre-Conquest fashions of adornment. The flamboyance of late pre-Conquest Britain seems to contrast with the post-conquest austerity of personal display in many parts of Britain. Yet should this surprise us? Flashy items of personal regalia will have been an open invitation, if not an incitement, to the more rapacious servants of the Roman empire. It is of course no surprise that the tradition of wearing neckbands and armbands did endure in some regions of the north and west of Britain, but even there the products were now more muted and understated.

In my recent work on Britain in the Roman empire (Mattingly 2006), I have tried to show how different groups in provincial society reconfigured their shared identity traits as much in terms of creating distance as in finding common ground with others in society. The new incarnation of Celtic art seems a perfect example of this, with a great deal of regional and social variability in the use of particular forms. This cultural complexity is exemplary of the impact of imperial and colonial systems more generally and the British material offers great possibilities for further analyses (see further Gosden 2004). The papers in this volume point the way forward in terms of how we might isolate and study this material. The unmaking of Iron Age identities had begun long before the Claudian invasion and continued long after. There were profound consequences of this loss of identity, reflective of a corresponding loss of autonomy among the British peoples as subjects (or near neighbours) of Rome. This was not entirely a destructive process, but also entailed a reforging of identities in the face of the political and cultural challenges posed by this mega-state. The material culture that resulted represented a broad spectrum of influences and understandings, where local and global (or Iron Age and Roman) both had relevance (Hingley 2005).

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Plate 1. The upper part of the Kirkburn sword. © Copyright the Trustees of The British Museum. (See Chapter 1, p. 11)

Plate 2. Examples of objects with classic ‘swirly’ decoration (top to bottom: the Waterloo helmet, the Thames spearhead, the Desborough mirror). © Copyright the Trustees of The British Museum. (See Chapter 2, p. 18)

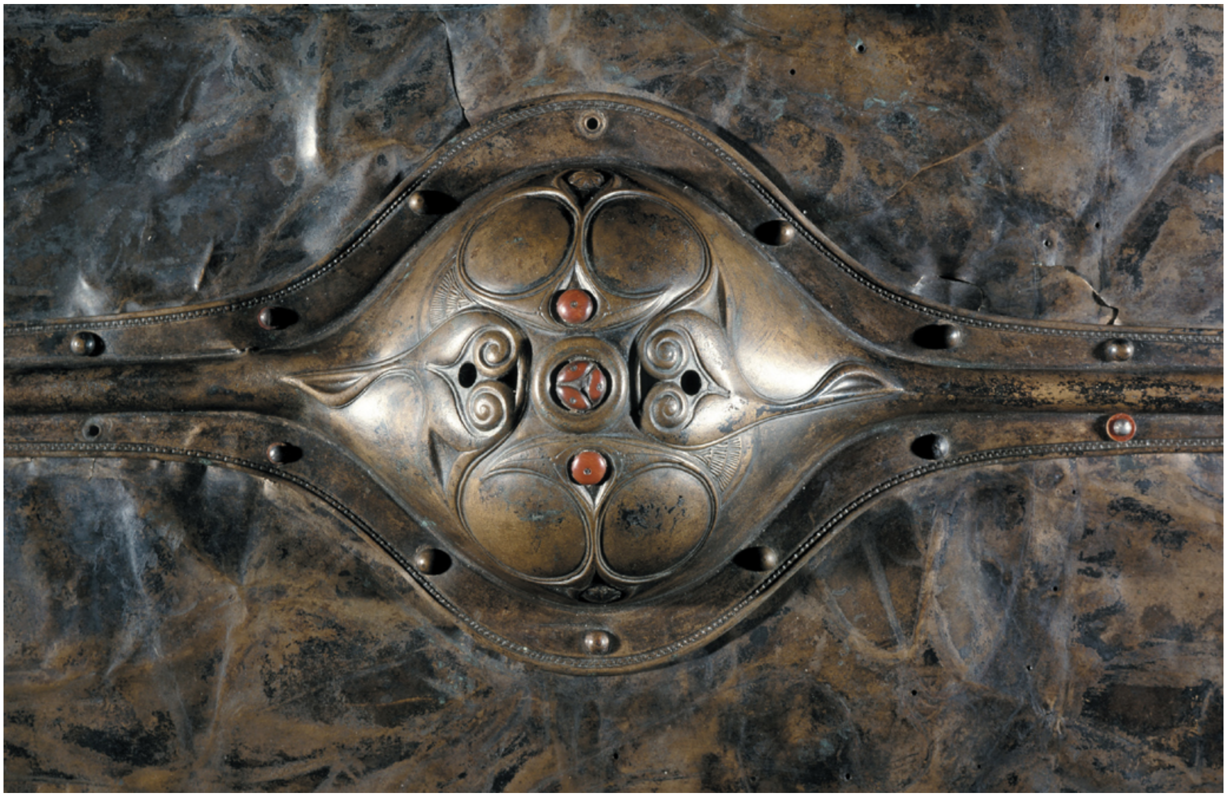


Plate 3. Witham, Lincolnshire. Detail of bronze shield with coral inlay. Total length of shield 113cm. © Copyright the Trustees of The British Museum. (See Chapter 3, p. 53)

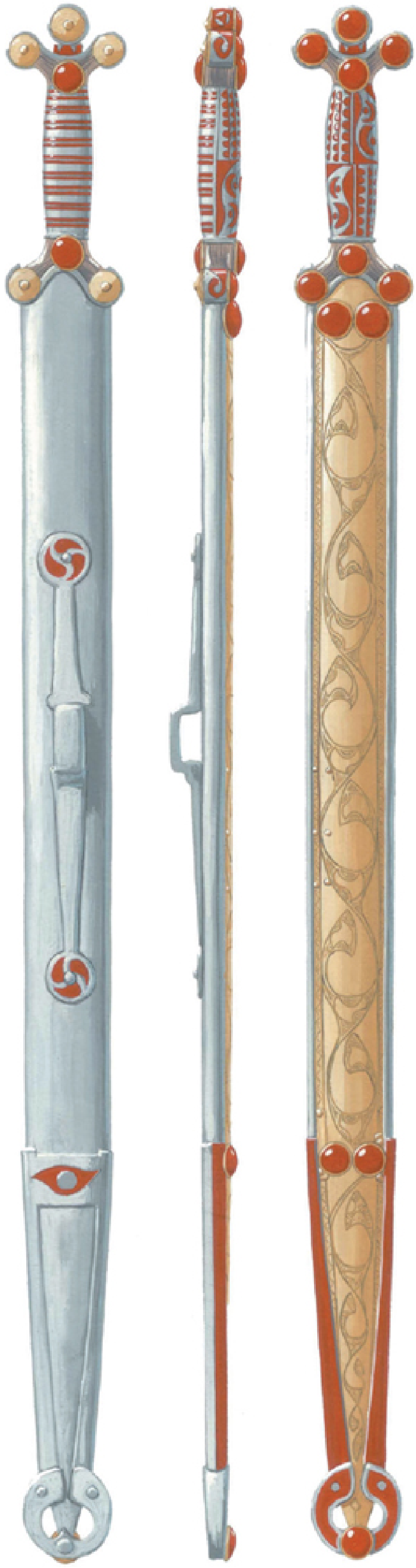
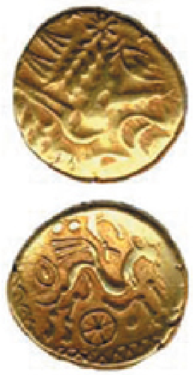


Plate 4. Reconstruction of the Kirkburn sword and scabbard by Simon James (reproduced by the kind permission of the illustrator). (See Chapter 4, p. 65)



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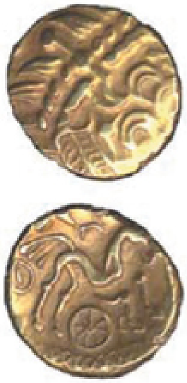

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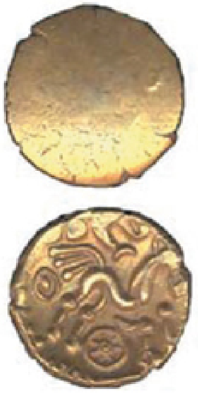

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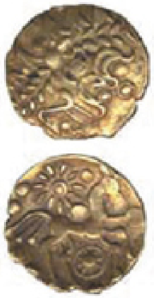

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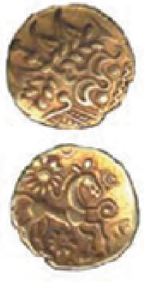

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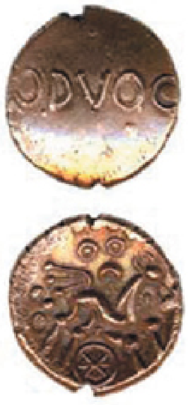

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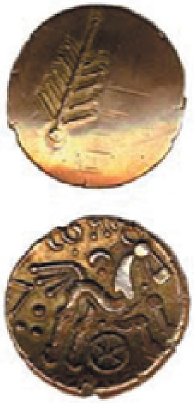

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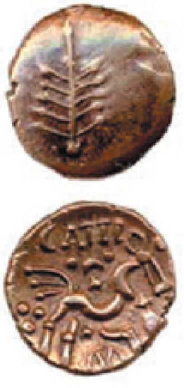

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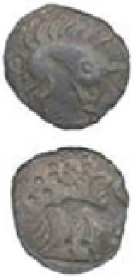

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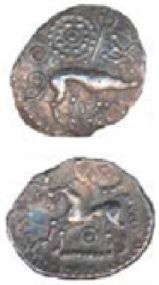

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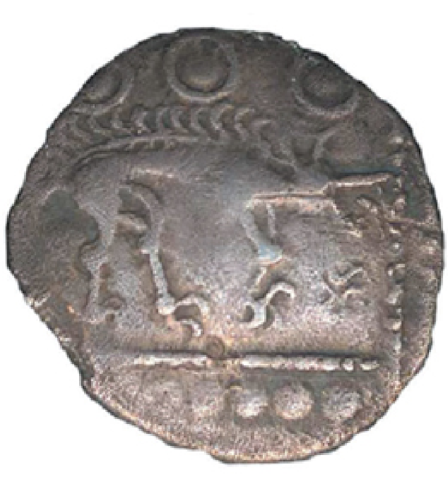

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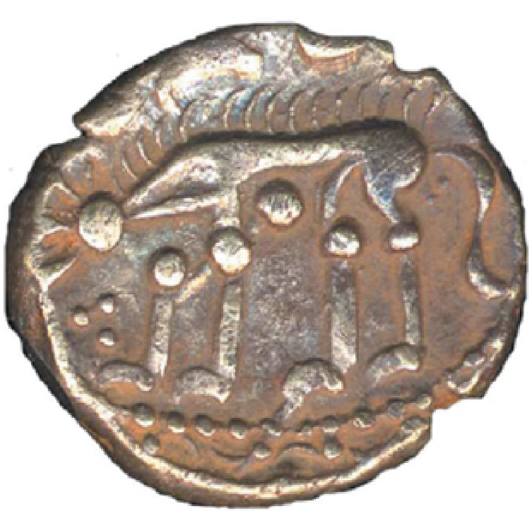

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Plate 5. Coins referred to in Chapter 6 (scale 1:1)

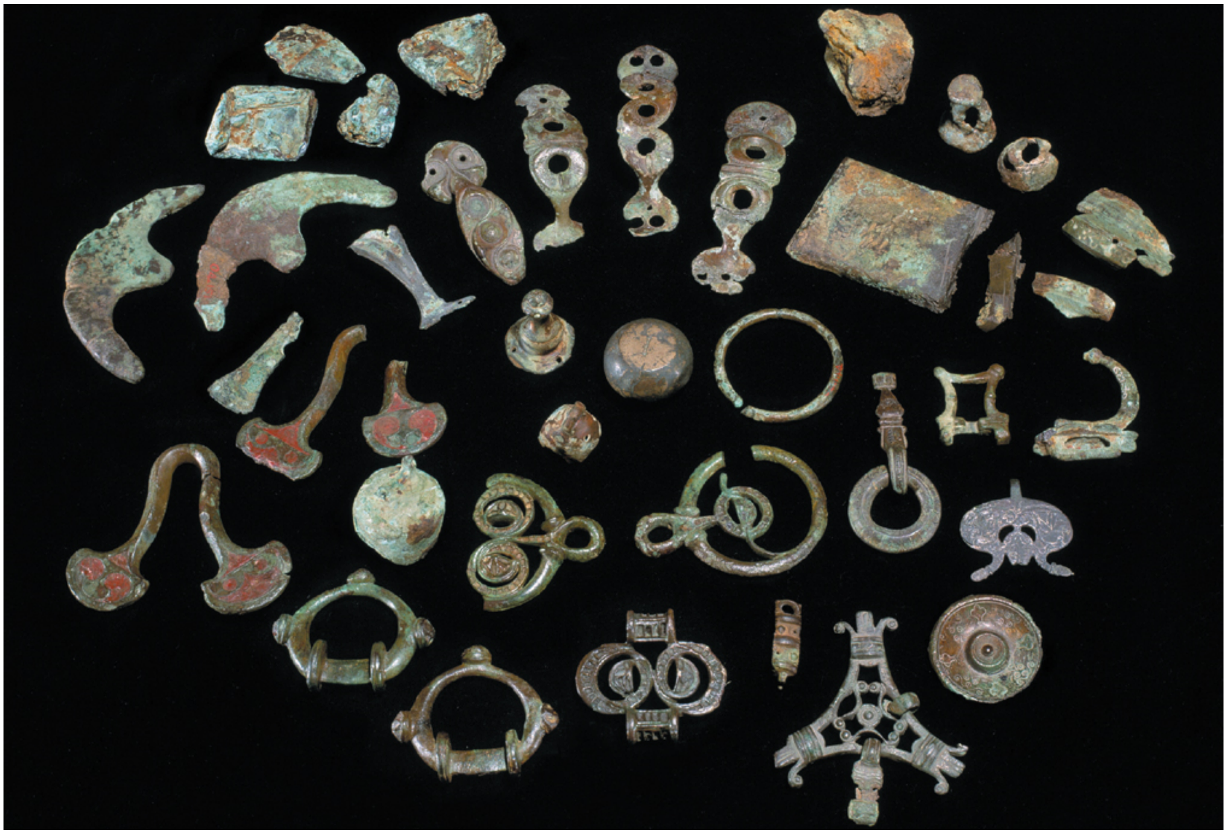

Plate 6. The Seven Sisters hoard. (See Chapter 9, p. 148)

Plate 7. Looking down the Appian Way (photo: M. Spratling). (See Chapter 10, p. 187)

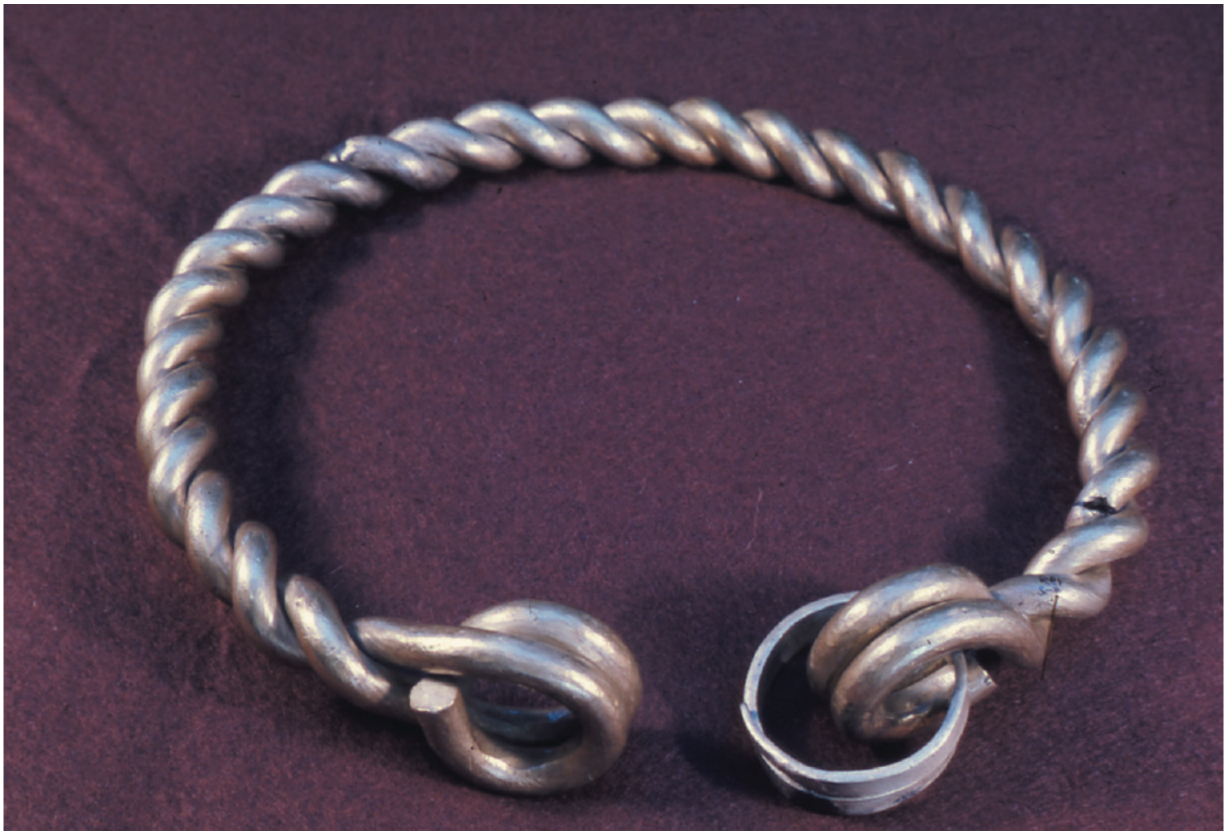

Plate 8. Torc D from Snettisham (photo: M. Spratling). (See Chapter 10, p. 187)

Plate 9. Psyche by Canova (copy), Wrest Park, Beds. (photo: M. Spratling). (See Chapter 10, p. 190)